



J. W. Porcher delin.

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Vera Effigies
TIMOTHEI CRUSO.
Ætat. 40. 1697.

TWENTY-FOUR
SERMONS


Preached at the
MERCHANTS-LECTURE
A T

Pinner's Hall.

By the late Reverend
Mr. *TIMOTHY CRUSO.*

154 L O N D O N :

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TO THE READER.

These Sermons are some of the Reliques of one who is gone to receive the Fruit of his Labours, who hath left Sowing for the sake of the Harvest, wherein he is now reaping. Though this is a Posthumous Piece, yet it speaks out the living Praise of the dead Author, whose it was without any Alteration or Addition, being Printed from his own Notes.

If I may use the Phrase in Fashion, he lived too fast; not as too many do, who shorten their Days by their Debaucheries, and sinful Excesses, but as a Taper which wastes it self to give Light to others. His Bodily Constitution was too weak to undergo the Service his Soul put it to, in constant Studies and hard Labour, that he might Answer the Restlessness of his Mind, which was always aspiring to greater Knowledge and higher Attainments, whereby he laid greater load upon his Flesh than its weakness could bear, and so sinking under the burden, he died in the midst of his Days.

There is no need of my Epistle to Midwife these Excellent Discourses into the World, nor had I had any hand in it, had it not been to answer the Desires of some Relations of his, to whom my Obligations will not allow me to deny any

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thing ; And also to take this occasion to Vindicate what I spake and published in his Funeral Sermon about the Union of the Spirit of Christ with the Dead Body of a Saint, which hath by some been greatly stumbled at, and called in question as a new Doctrine, I therefore thought it Charity to such to remove this stumbling Block, not by any Arguments further than what I have therein already urged, but by calling in the Judgment of others in this matter, and I shall look no farther back, than to the Learned Men of our own Times.

*Treatise of the Cove-
nant of Grace,* p. 216.
Mr. Rutherford speaking of the Covenant of Grace, says, It is thus Eternal, in that the dead Parties, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are still in the Covenant of Grace, and there remains a Covenant Union between Christ and their rotten Flesh sleeping in the Dust.

Morning Exercise of Giles in Fields, Ser. 24: p. 548.
Mr. Calamy says, The Bodies of the Saints shall be raised by vertue of their Union with Christ ; for the Body of a Saint, even while it is in the Grave, is united to Christ, and is asleep in Jesus, and shall be raised by vertue of this Union. And in p. 557. If thou gettest into Christ while thou livest, thou shalt die in Christ, and sleep in Christ, and be raised by Christ into Eternal Happines.

Case his Mount Pisgah, first Part, p. 38.
Mr. Case speaking of the Union between Christ and Believers, says, Not only in Death, but even after Death this Union holds ; the Saints are said to sleep in Jesus ; that part of the Saints which is capable of sleep, is not capable of Separation from Christ : While their more noble Part is united to Christ in Heaven, among the Spirits of Just Men made perfect ; Christ is united to their inferiour, and more ignoblie

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ignoble Part in the Grave, their very Dust ;
they sleep in Jesus.

Mr. Stedman says, Death it self shall not separate Believers from Jesus Christ, but still they are entirely in him even when they are dead. As it was in the death of Christ himself, though it made Separation *between his Body and Soul*, yet it did not separate the *Humane Body from the Divine* : So it is in the death of the Saints, though it rend the Spirit from the Flesh, yet it can part neither from the Son of God. The very Bodies of Believers are united to Jesus when they are dead.

Stedman's
Mystical Union of Believers with Christ
 p. 191.

Dr. Collings on those words of our Lord, He that believeth on me shall never die, *says,* Though his Body shall die because of sin, yet his Spirit shall live because of Righteousness, and God shall in the great Day quicken again his Mortal Body, through the Holy Spirit which dwelleth in him, and is united to him.

He Pool's Annotations on John 11. 26.

Dr. Thomas Goodwin : Doth the Spirit dwell in you now? When you are laid in the Grave, that Spirit dwelleth in you, as he did in the Body of Christ. I do not say, in the same manner. The Spirit of God did dwell in the Body of Christ in the Grave, and raised it up, he never left him. Though his Body was a dead Carcass without a Soul, yet that Body was *Hypostatically* united to the Godhead, therefore it was called *Holy One* ; *My Holy One shall not see Corruption.* Now the Comparison is, If we have the Spirit of Christ, and if he dwell in us, the same Spirit shall never leave our Bodies till he hath raised us up also. Nay, while thy Body is dead and rotten

Dr. Goodwin's first Fol. on Ephes. 1. 14.

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rotten in the Grave, the *Holy Ghost* dwells in it.

And hear what a great Man of the Church of England in his Day, saith ; Christ's Deity was united to his dead Body,—— his Resurrection was perform'd by the Power and Spirit of the Father. God reached out his hand to him, and raised him up. Here then is our Comfort ; the same Spirit of God is communicable to us, the same Arm of Power may be reached out to us.—— He will employ the same power for us as he did for Christ, *Ephes. i. 19.*

And again in p. 210. His Spirit dwells in you. The Inhabitation of God's Spirit, that is the Ground of our Resurrection, because it is *Vinculum unionis*, the Spirit is the Bond of our Union and Conjunction with Christ. By it we are Incorporated into his Body, and made Members of it. Now then, if our Head rise, all the Members must rise with it ; if the Head be in Heaven, the Members shall not for ever perish in the Grave. This Union by the Spirit is like the touch of a *Load-stone*, it will attract and draw us to him, that *where he is, we shall be also.* It is spoken of his *Hypostatical*, but it is true also of his *Mystical Union*, *Quod semel assumpsit nunquam deposuit.* Christ will part with none of his Members. *And again in the same*

Bishop
Brownrig,
2d Vol.
p. 204.

Page. Our Bodies by this Inhabitation are Consecrated to be a Possession of the *Holy Ghost*, and the Temple of God must not be destroy'd.—— God's Spirit takes Pleasure not only in these living Temples, but owns them when they are dead ; takes Pleasure in

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in the dead Bones, and Favours the Dust of them.

I could multiply Testimonies of elder Date, to prove the Truth of this Doctrine, and that it is no new Notion; but there needs no Proof from Humane Testimony, when it is so plainly confirmed by the Word of God, as I have elsewhere shewed. If we receive the Witness of Men, the Witness of God is greater. And there needs no greater Vindication of any Doctrine, than the Testimony of God to the truth of it.

The Author of these Discourses was a Person whose Worth was well known in this City; he was a Person of a sound Mind and Judgment in the great Doctrines of the Gospel, and held fast the Form of sound Words, carefully shunning the Paths of those By-way Men, who please themselves with the fond Thoughts of such Opinions, wherein they chuse to walk by themselves apart from the Community of the Saints, and Churches of God.

None who knew him, and love the Interest of Christ, and the Souls of Men, but must bewail the loss of such an Eminent Servant in the Lord's Work, especially in such a day as this is wherein the Harvest is so great, and Faithful, Labourers so few.

But why stand I in the Door-way which leads to the Discourse it self? I shall therefore no longer hinder thy Entrance, than by begging a Blessing upon the Work, that it may be sanctified to thy Understanding for Knowledge, to thy Judgment

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*ment for Establishment, to thy Conscience for
Peace, and for Joy and Gladness to thy whole
Soul. So Prays*

Thy Servant in the Lord's Work,

Febr. 2d.
1699.

And for his Sake,

Matth. Mead.

ERRATA.

Page 18. Line 9. read *Duties* : P. 25. l. 21. r. *it's* :
P. 28. l. 27. r. *not* : P. 31. l. 28. r. *askt* : P. 51.
l. 15. r. *Fortifies* : P. 52. l. 15. r. *the* : P. 77. l. 16. r.
knew : P. 79. l. 21. r. *of* : P. 104. l. 11. r. *Law* : P. 144.
l. 1. r. dele *that*, l. 27. r. *hardened* : P. 193. l. 12. dele
when we are so : P. 213. l. 17. r. *but* : P. 256. l. 4. r. *are* :
P. 257. l. 12. r. *Comparison* : P. 274. l. 13. dele *and* :
P. 315. l. 25. r. *bounds* : P. 330. l. 6. r. *Thyatira's* :
P. 335. l. 11. r. *Equivalent* : P. 362. l. 26. r. *Scope*.

SERMON

THE TEXTS.

Matth. XVI. 17.

AND Jesus answered and said unto him,
Blessed art thou Simon Bar-jona ; for Flesh
and Blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Fa-
ther which is in Heaven

Page 1

Psaln XXVI. 3.

For thy loving kindness is before mine eyes : and I
have walked in thy Truth

p. 36

2 Corinth. I. 20.

For all the Promises of God in him are yea, and in
him Amen, unto the Glory of God by us

p. 67

Psaln LXXX. 17. and 18. former part.

Let thy hand be upon the Man of thy right hand, upon
the Son of Man whom thou madest strong for thy
self. 18. So will not we go back from thee,

p. 95

Judges XVI. 20. last Clause.

And he wist not that the Lord was departed from
him,

p. 125

Acts V. 32. latter part.

And so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God has given
to them that obey him,

p. 156

Mark

Mark X. 26, 27.

And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved?

And Jesus looking upon them, saith, With Men it's impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible,

P. 186

Psalms LXIX. 4. last Clause.

Then I restored that which I took not away

P. 217

Gallat. IV. 6.

And because ye are Sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your Hearts, crying, Abba, Father,

P. 247

Ephes. IV. 7.

But unto every one of us is given Grace, according to the measure of the Gift of Christ,

P. 279

Deuteronomy XXXIV. 5.

So Moses the Servant of the Lord died there in the Land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord,

P. 311

Hebr. VII. 25.

Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make Intercession for them

P. 340.

SERMON I.

April 23. 1695.

MATTHEW XVI. xvii.

*And Jesus answered and said unto him,
Blessed art thou Simon Bar-jona: For
Flesh and Blood hath not revealed it unto
thee, but my Father which is in Heaven.*

TO understand the occasion of these Words, we must look back as far as *ver. 13.* of this Chapter, where our Lord, having a mind to clear and confirm his Disciples in the Knowledge of himself, makes way for it, by the proposing of such Questions, as would draw forth suitable Answers. Accordingly

1. He asks them, what was the Opinion of others concerning him. *Whom do Men say, that I the Son of Man am?* Christ usually stiled himself thus, *Son of Man*, not only as an Expression of his Humility, but to shew that he was the promised Seed, the Person foretold under that Character in the Old Testament, *Psal. 8. 4. 80. 17. Dan. 7. 13.* And perhaps also to try the Faith of his Hearers, whether they had an Eye to any more than his Humanity; there-
B fore

fore says he here, what does that World which you Converse with, think of me, what kind of Person do they take me to be? The Answer is, *ver. 14. Some say, that thou art John the Baptist, some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the Prophets.* Here was a diversity of Opinions about Christ, and none of them right, but all false and fabulous, the Products of vain Imagination. *That Christ was John the Baptist, risen from the Dead, was Herods Opinion, Chap. 14. 2.* That he was *Elias*, was the Opinion of many among the Jews, who had a mistaken Notion that *Elias* must first come before the Appearance of Christ, *Chap. 17. 10.* And again another sort of them thought, that he was the Soul of some eminent Deceased Prophet in a new Body; which was one of the wild Conceits of that dark, erroneous Age.

But 2. Christ asks them, what was their own Opinion? *ver. 15. Whom say ye, that I am?* Do you concur with this blind and ignorant World, or have you any better Apprehensions of me different from theirs? 'Tis meet, that you who are my little Flock, should give me some account of your particular Belief; and 'tis also meet, that seeing you are to Preach me unto others, you should first make some Confession of me your selves. The Answer to this, and the Person answering, we have *ver. 16.* Which, because it hath an immediate Coherence with the Words now before us, ought to be distinctly consider'd. And

1. We may begin with the less considerable Part, the Person speaking, [*Simon Peter answered and said.*] 'Tis probable, that he spake as the Mouth of the Apostles, in the Name of all, and

and that the rest agreed to this Testimony, and believ'd as he said. Not that he had any real Precedency, or Superiority above the rest (for then, why should they enquire, who was the greatest, &c. Chap. 18. 1.) but because he was one of the first call'd to the Apostleship, and of the more esteem among them, as he was of so long a standing; and because he was of a very warm and forward Spirit, as-is evident by many other Passages.

2. Here is the Thing spoken, which is the main Subject of our Consideration. [*Thou art Christ the Son of the Living God.*] The same good Confession was made once before by *Peter*, *John* 6. 69. And now repeated, to evidence his firm Establishment in this grand Article of Faith. In which our Lord is describ'd two Ways, both by his Office, and his Essence.

1. Christ is a Name of Office, of the same Signification with the *Messiah*, as the Holy Ghost himself Interprets it. *John* 1. 41. *The anointed of the Lord*; he to whom the Prophets witness't, he that should come into the World; as *John* 11. 27. He whose Work and Business was to be a Saviour, not a Temporal, but an Eternal one, a Saviour from Sin and Wrath, from the drudgery of the Devil, and the Prison of Hell.

2. The Son of God is a Name, which respects his Essence and Being; a Son, not by Adoption and Grace, as the *Baptist*, and *Elias*, and *Jeremy*, and the other Prophets were, but a Son by Nature; a Son whose Generation is ineffable, for he is infinitely Equal with the Father; for he is true God, as well as Son of God; the Father hath that Title of the Living God, in Opposition to false Gods, *Jer.* 10. 10.

Acts 14. 15. And the very same Title is likewise given to the Son, *Heb.* 3. 12. Jesus is true Jehovah, and (according to the true Import of that Word) he hath Life in himself, as the Father hath, *John* 5. 26. Well; Christ's Commendation of this Confession, is set down in the Text, *Jesus answered and said unto him, &c.* Where we may take Notice of three Things.

1. The Name which Christ calls this Apostle by. *Simon Bar-jonai*, or *Simon*, Son of *Jona*, as the Word signifies. *Peter* was the Name that Christ gave to him, *ver.* 18. As God gave the Name of *Israel* to *Jacob*, *Gen.* 32. 28. But here Christ puts him in Mind of the meanness of his Extraction, and of what he was originally; as he does again after his fall, no less than three Times over, *John* 21. 15, 16, 17. What change soever is made upon us by the Favour and Mercy of God, 'tis good to reflect sometimes upon our Primitive Vileness and Wretchedness, to look to the Rock whence we are hewn, and the hole of the Pit, whence we are digged.

2. The Happy State which Christ pronounc't him to be in. *Blessed art thou.* Christ had Authority to pronounce Persons blessed, for he had Power to make them so, *Acts* 3. 26. *God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you.* He can really and effectually do it; what *Balak* said falsely of *Balaam*, is true of Christ, *The Man whom he blesses, is blessed* (*Numb.* 22. 6.) If he blesses, we shall be blessed for ever, as *David* said to God, *1 Chron.* 17. 27. Such is the Blessedness which Christ speaks of here; both Perfect and Perpetual, without Defect and without Decay.

3. The Reason assign'd to back this comfortable

able Sentence, which refers to the Way and Means of the discovery of that Truth which *Peter* had now confest; and this is laid down both Negatively and Affirmatively.

1. Negatively, *For Flesh and Blood hath not revealed it unto Thee.* Flesh and Blood are variously taken in Scripture.

1. Sometimes for the humane Nature, consisting of Soul and Body; so *Heb. 2. 14.*

2. Sometimes for the natural Body, accompanied with its present Infirmities, in Opposition to a spiritual glorified Body. So *1 Cor. 15. 50.*

3. Sometimes for humane Instruction; so *Gal. 1. 16.* Paul says, that he conferred not with *Flesh and Blood*, which is the same Thing, with not receiving the Gospel which he Preacht, of Man, *ver. 12.*

4. Sometimes for humane Opposition, so *Eph. 6. 12.* *We wrestle not with Flesh and Blood, &c.* i. e. we have not only to do with persecuting Men, but raging Devils.

5. Sometimes for natural Reason; our own Judgments and Understanding. And this I take to be the principal Sense of the Phrase here; *q. d.* Thou dost not owe this Revelation to thy self, or to any discerning Faculty in thee above other Men.

2. Affirmatively, *But my Father which is in Heaven.* Four Things seem to be intimated by this.

1. That there is a mysterious Order in all Divine Operations, according to which God the Father is to be lookt upon as the Fountain. The Father Works, and the Son and Spirit Works conjunctly; there is no Inequality or

Subordination among the Persons, and yet we are led by the Gospel to Eye the first Person as the spring of all. When our Lord speaks of sending the Comforter, 'tis from the Father, *John* 15. 26. And when the Spirit of the Son is sent forth into our Hearts, God is said to do it, which is plainly meant of God the Father, *Gal.* 4. 6.

2. That in all the Works of Grace towards lost Creatures, God acts as the Father of Christ, *Eph.* 1. 3. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual Blessings in him.* Out of Christ we can expect only the Curse of God, as a revenging Judge, but we can expect nothing from him as a Father, in a way of Love and Mercy.

3. Acquaintance with the only begotten Son of God must flow from him that begat him. *No Man knoweth the Son, but the Father, as no Man knoweth the Father but the Son,* *Mat.* 11. 27. Therefore they mutually manifest and declare each other, which none else is capable of doing. Who should lay open the Secrets of one Man to another, but himself? And who should reveal the glorious Persons in the Godhead, but themselves? See *1 Cor.* 2. 11.

4. If therefore we look for Light, we must look upwards. As the Sun over our Heads is the visible Cause of natural Illumination, so spiritual Illumination is from an Infinite Being above the Sun. 'Tis one of the gracious Issues which belong to our Father in Heaven. The dark Places of the Earth, unanimously say, it is not in us. *Every good and perfect Gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights.* *James* 1. 17. The Words thus open'd, come to this Point.

Obf.

Obf. *There is a certain Blessedness annex to the Knowledge of those Truths, which humane Reason does not discover, but God himself.*
Here

1. Shew, That there are some Truths necessary to be believ'd, which humane Reason neither does nor can discover.
2. How such Truths are discovered by God.
3. What kind of Knowledge is the Effect of this discovery.
4. Wherein lyes the Blessedness annex to that Knowledge.
5. Why it is so.
6. Use.

1. To shew, That there are some Truths necessary to be believ'd, which humane Reason cannot discover. The peculiar Doctrines of the Gospel are as deep, as the Commands of the Law are broad. But I will confine my self to the instance mention'd in the Context, the Godhead of Jesus Christ. Every one is bound to believe this, and every Man that calls himself a Christian, professes the Belief of it; without such a Profession, his Christianity is void, and without such a Belief, his Profession is vain. To take upon us the Christian Name, and deny the Deity of Christ, is a lying to Men, and an outward acknowledgment of this, where there is not an hearty Consent, is lying to God. Now that this is not discoverable by humane Reason, is no difficult Matter to prove. Let us consider a little these two Things.

1. Reason could never have found out this

Truth, of the Godhead of Christ. The Existence of a God is a natural Impression upon the Minds of Men, and therefore almost universally own'd ; but a Trinity of Persons in Unity of Essence, and such an Order among the Persons, as makes Jesus Christ the Second determinately, not the First or Third, is one of the great Mysteries of Faith. By those common remainders of Light, which every Man hath, that comes into the World, every Age hath brought forth some new Inventions and Discoveries of Things that have been truly ingenious and useful in their kind, but still they have been Things within the proper Compass and sphere of Nature. Jesus Christ would have been for ever the unknown God, if Reason had been left to make the search. For,

1. How many parts of the World are there, utterly destitute of the Knowledge of this Truth! Though the Nations of them that are saved walk in the Light of it, yet there are several other Nations of Men that have natural Sagacity enough, who sit in gross Darkeness as to these Things. Multitudes; Multitudes, in the Wilderness of the *Heathen*, whom God hath not yet brought into the Valley of Vision, that never heard whether there be a Christ or no. He that should tell the uncalled *Gentiles* of such a Person, would be a *Barbarian* to them, though he had learnt to speak in their own Tongue.

2. The Notions of some of the Learned *Heathens* which look a little this way, were both borrow'd and deprav'd. What was true in them, was not their own, but learnt by Tradition from the *Jews*, who were instructed out of the Law ; all the rest was wretchedly corrupt, and dishonourable to Christ, and injurious to

Reli-

Religion. Therefore the Apostle gives that Caution, *Col. 2. 8. Beware lest any Man spoil you through Philosophy and vain Deceit, &c.* And therefore he passes that Censure, *Rom. 1. 22. Professing themselves to be wise, they become Fools.*

3. Those Signatures and Prints of this Truth which some fancy to be upon the visible Creation, are too obscure to Collect so great a Doctrine from. There may be some little resemblances of a Trinity in some of the Works of God, but as they are too weak to confirm our Faith of it by, so we may safely conclude, that no Man in the World, would ever have spelt a Trinity out of them, if he had not heard of it before. *But as Knowledge is easie to him that understandeth, Prov. 14. 6.* So we fancy many Evidences of those Things, of which we are convinc'd already.

2. Reason cannot find out this Truth to Perfection, though the Scripture hath brought it to Light; now it is reveal'd to us another Way, Reason is puzzled with it. For

1. Things of an Infinite Nature must needs be Eternal Riddles to Finites Minds. God would not be God, if Men or Angels could comprehend him; he must cease to be what he is, if we could fully know what he is. Uncreated Excellency and Glory cannot be taken in to such shallow and scanty Thoughts. We can understand the Relation which is between Creatures like our selves, we can explain it, and give a satisfactory Account of it one to another; but how the Divine Persons, our Everlasting Creators (as the Spirit sometimes expresses it) are mutually related, is not to be perfectly unfolded. How the same Person should be Man and yet God,
how

how the same God should be a Son, and yet never begin to be, will be matter of endless Admiration. -

2. Reason Objects so many Difficulties against this Truth, of the Sonship of Jesus Christ, as make us very slow in receiving it. The manner of it is so inexplicable, that therefore the thing it self seems to be incredible; for naturally we affect to be satisfied how every thing is, which we allow to be. The carnal Mind is Enmity in this Case, and instead of promoting, opposes, therefore the Apostle speaks of casting down Imaginations, or Reasonings (*λογισμῶς*) by the Ministry of the Gospel, 2 Cor. 10. 5. As there is a natural *Popery*, so a natural *Socinianism*, which exalts it self against the Knowledge of God and Christ.

3. The Faith of these Things which is wrought in us, is not built upon the Evidence of Reason, but the Authority of God. There is indeed a Reason of Faith; it is reasonable that we should believe whatsoever God reveals, and 'tis reasonable we should be assur'd, that this or that is his Revelation; so far Reason is subservient to Faith in the general; but to believe a particular Truth because it may be rationally demonstrated, is not the Faith of the Gospel; we are to believe, because it is Divinely Revealed; this is Faith. Otherwise in believing, we do not set our Seal to the Truth of God, but the Reason of the Thing. So that if it were possible to bring other Proofs as well as Scriptural of the Deity of our Lord Jesus (which it is not, for it is a Matter of pure Revelation) yet the Faith of a Christian, as such, could not rest upon them.

2. How are such Truths as these discovered II.
to us by God. In short, it is the special Work
of the Spirit to reveal Christ to us, to direct
our Minds into the Knowledge of his Person,
and to take of his Things and to spread them
before us with convincing Light. *Eye hath not
seen, &c. The Things which God hath prepared, &c.
But God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit, for
the Spirit searcheth all Things, &c. 1 Cor. 2. 9, 10.*
But as to the Way and Manner of this Revela-
tion of Divine Things by the Spirit of God, I
would offer these Particulars.

1. It is not in the neglect and disuse of out-
ward Means. God will not countenance our
Contempt of what is required and appointed by
himself. He hath commanded us privately to
search the Scriptures which testify of Christ,
and to attend the Publick Preaching of Christ
in Worshipping Assemblies; and so in and by
the Word, as a fit vehicle of spiritual Light,
he is pleas'd to convey the Knowledge of him-
self, and of his Son. The Scriptures and Or-
dinances cannot enlighten us without the Spi-
rit, and ordinarily the Spirit does it not with-
out them, Ministers are stiled Instructors in
Christ, 1 Cor. 4. 15. And they are so by Vertue
of the Institution of Christ, and the Spirit of
Christ employs and make use of them to serve
the Purposes and Ends of his own Grace.

Obj. Does not the Holy Ghost say, *They shall
not teach every Man his Neighbour, and his Bro-
ther, saying, Know the Lord, &c. Heb. 8. 11.
And you need not that any Man teach you, 1 John
2. 27.*

Ans. 1. 'Tis most evident, that these Places
do

do not intend the advancing of immediate Illumination, in defiance to instituted Means; the teachings of God are not to be oppos'd to the teachings of Men; for even in the New Testament the teachings of Men are often mention'd as subordinate to the teachings of God. *He that heareth you,* says Christ to his Apostles, *heareth me,* Luke 10. 16. *And though Men are Ambassadors for Christ, it is as though God did beseech you by them,* 2 Cor. 5. 20.

2. The sence of these Places therefore must be, that the Effusion of the Spirit under the Gospel would be so plentiful, not as to exclude humane Teaching, or render it unnecessary, but so as vastly to exceed and out-do it, that in comparison it should be as no Teaching; for Believers that are taught of God, though they despise not external Ministrations, yet may say to their Ministers, as the *Samaritans* to the Woman, *John* 4. 42. *Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard him our selves, and know that this is indeed the Christ,* &c.

2. Though it be in the use of outward Means, yet 'tis an internal discovery; there is an Application not only of Words to the Eye, or Ear, but of Conviction to the Mind. *God who commanded the Light to shine out of Darkness, hath shined in our Hearts,* &c. 2 Cor. 4. 6. So *Paul* says of himself, with respect to the Time of his Conversion; *When it pleased God to reveal his Son in me,* Gal. 1. 15, 16. This inward Revelation is of a perfectly different kind from the bare revealing of Christ to us in the Letter of the Gospel, though it be the same Christ, who is reveal'd both to us, and in us; for in the Work of Faith God inspires the Soul with new Per-

Perceptions of Divine Objects, so that there is communicated and imprinted another Sense and sight of those very Things, of which we had formerly heard. The Spirit secretly suggests that which we never knew, concerning that which we did slightly and superficially know. All the great Transactions of God which accompany Salvation, are within us, unseen and unknown to any but our selves. 'Tis the inward Man which is transform'd and renewed in Knowledge; and the Spirit who does all this for us, is said to be dwelling in us.

3. The Spirit Works freely in making this discovery. Though we are tyed to use the Means, he is not oblig'd to work by them always, upon every one that does enjoy them. He divides his Gifts and Graces to this and that Person, *severally as he will*, 1 Cor. 12. 11. He is compar'd to the *Wind which bloweth where it listeth*, John 3. 8. 'Tis not in vain, that the Spirit and the Wind have the same Name in the Original Languages of the Scriptures, and in that extraordinary pouring out of the Spirit, *Acts 2. 2. There came a sound from Heaven, as of a rushing mighty Wind, which fill'd the House*; because as the Wind is not at the command of any Creature, with reference to its moving or ceasing, blowing one way or another, so the Spirit of God is a free Agent in all his Operations; he is under no necessity of enlightning those whom he does enlighten; he does it for one, and not for another, in the hearing of the same Word, to shew that he Acts with the highest Liberty, *Mat. 13. 11. It is given to you to know the Mysteries, &c. but to them it is not given.*

4. The

4. The Spirit Works effectually in these Discoveries. He makes dead Letters to become lively Oracles. There is an Excellency of Power which goes along with the Word, when he causes it to be receiv'd. *According to his working, which worketh in me mightily*, Col. 1. 29. The thick scales of Ignorance and Infidelity (like those of the Leviathan, *Job* 41. 17.) stick so close, that it must be a strong Hand which removes and separates them from our Understandings. There never was any saving Revelation of Gospel-Truths, to any Sinner in the World from the very beginning of it, without a Revelation of the Arm of the Lord, *Isa.* 53. 1. But wheresoever this Arm of God is revealed, the Report of the Gospel is both understood and believ'd. This Omnipotent cause never fails of producing its intended Effect. So Christ expressly says, *John* 6. 45. *Every Man that hath heard, and learned of the Father, cometh unto me.* Every Man without one Exception.

5. The Spirit Works in this Case, suitably to the Nature of our Faculties; he does not destroy or force them, but enlarge and improve them. He does not put out the Eye of our Minds, but open it. Our foolish Hearts are naturally darkned, and he does not impose upon them, but clear them. Every Believer can testify this to the Honour of Christ, that his sight hath not been taken away, but restor'd; as he boldly said to the *Pharisees*, *John* 9. 25. *One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.* We were blind before, and thought that we saw; now we really see, and know that we were blind. The Understanding of a Man is the workmanship of God, and he does not

not overthrow that, when he makes us new Creatures. The Demonstration of the Spirit is such as we cannot resist, and yet it offers no Violence to us. The Judgment is truly convinc't, and we can say, *We know whom we have believed*; 2 Tim. 1. 12.

6. The Spirit in discovering of such Truths, Works alone, and by himself. There is no Conjunction or proper Co-operation of second Causes with him. It is here, as it was with those, in *Mat 20. 34. Jesus touched their Eyes, and immediately they receiv'd sight*. 'Tis the touch of Christs Hand only which recovers us from spiritual blindness. Nature contributes nothing to the efficacious workings of Grace; and therefore 'tis observ'd, that many of the Holy Women whom our Lord descended from, were barren, to shew, that they Conceive'd not by the strength of their own Womb, but by vertue of the Promise: As *Sarah, Rebeckah, Rachel, &c.* So we are *Light in the Lord*, Eph. 5. 8. But we do not help towards the creating of it in our selves. We are meerly Passive in the first Reception of Divine Light, as the Eye of the Body is truly Passive in the taking in of natural Light. All Light is brought into the Eye; so it springs in from Heaven into the Mind, which is no better than a very Dungeon of it self.

3. What kind of Knowledge is that which is III the Effect and Fruit of this discovery of saving Truth by God to the Soul. This is the rather to be insisted on a little, because it may be of great Advantage to us in the Trial of our State, that we may make a right Judgment of our selves, whether under the Conduct of Flesh and Blood, or of the Father.

1. That

1. That Knowledge which proceeds from the special inward Revelation of Divine Things, is a more assuring Knowledge than any other. The end of *Luke's* Writing his Gospel to *Theophilus*, was, *That he might know the certainty of those things, wherein he had been instructed*; *Luke* 1. 4. This Effect the Spirit of God hath by his enlightning Operation beyond all humane Instructions whatsoever; we are made to know the certainty of things, and more fully persuaded of the great reality of what is spiritual. They are no longer doubtful, disputable Opinions with us, but we come to such a firm Conclusion about them, that we can venture our Eternity upon them. The Scripture hints this in many Places, *John* 17. 8. *They have known surely that I came out from thee.* So the Apostle speaks of the Rich and full Assurance of Understanding, in the acknowledgment of the Mystery of God, &c. *Col.* 2. 2. And again, *Our Gospel came not unto you in Word only, but also in Power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much Assurance*; so that there is no hæitation or wavering concerning it, *1 Thess.* 1. 5.

2. That Knowledge which proceeds from such a Cause, is more affecting than any other. The Heart is influenced to greater Love and Joy, and Admiration by what it believes and knows. As the mind receives more solid Satisfaction with respect to those Truths, so those Truths are more sweet and delightful, more ravishing and transporting to the Soul. *Paul* speaks like a Man in an Extasie, with more than ordinary Zeal and Fervour; *Phil.* 3. 8. *Yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the Knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.* His magni-

magnifying of the Excellency of this Knowledge, sprung from his deep Sense of the Excellency of the Object: He saw so much worth in Christ, that he would part with ten Thousand Worlds, if he had them, for his sake. The Doctrine of Christ's God-head, Incarnation, Satisfaction, &c. when they are only taken into the Head as common Notions, are but dry Meat, but when they are imprest by the Holy Ghost, we can feed upon them with Pleasure. The Things of God being so reveal'd, that we taste the savour of them.

3. That Knowledge which is communicated by the Spirit, is always joyn'd with Experience. The Apprehensions which other Men have by common reasoning of spiritual Things, are like those of a blind Man, when he hears a Discourse concerning Light, which are very dark and imperfect in Comparison of his that hath Eyes to see the Sun. There is a vast difference between a Knowledge of Christ by Report and Hearsay (as one calls it) and a Knowledge of Acquaintance, which is gotten and improv'd by Communion with him. As the Queen of *Sbeba* was not told one half in her own Land of the greatness of *Solomons* Wisdom, which she afterwards saw, and yet what she was told, seem'd incredible to her, 2 *Chron.* 9. 6. So Believers find so much in Christ, when they come to him, as does not only justify the Report which Ministers gave to be very true, but abundantly exceed it. We cannot tell you, what they feel whom Christ is formed in, and who live every Day by the Faith of him. Where there is no spiritual Sense, the Mind is yet carnal.

4. That Knowledge which the Spirit produces,

ces, does always issue in Obedience. The Knowledge which Men attain unto by any other Ways, is barren and unprofitable; as it does not reach the Heart, so it is of no use in the ordering of the Conversation. But saving Knowledge governs the Life, and regulates the Practice; so as clearly to exemplifie that Connection which God hath made between the Truths to be believed, and to be performed. When *Paul* prays for his *Colossians*, *That they might be filled with the Knowledge of God's Will, in all Wisdom and spiritual Understanding*, he does not stop there, but shews whither this tends, *That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, &c. Col. 1. 9, 10.* He that is truly nourisht up in the words of Faith and good Doctrine will evidence it by fruitfulness in good Works, *1 John 2. 3. Hereby we do know that we know him (Jesus Christ) if we keep his Commandments.* They have not learned Christ as they ought, that do not live to him; for if we be acquainted with his Person, we shall submit to his Rule.

S E R.

SERMON II.

May 7. 1695.

MATTHEW XVI. xvii.

*And Jesus answered and said unto him,
 • Blessed art thou Simon Bar-jona: For
 Flesh and Blood hath not revealed it unto
 thee, but my Father which is in Heaven.*

IV. **W** Herein lies the Blessedness which is annexed to this kind of Knowledge? Some bless themselves, without Reason, too many against Scripture bless themselves, when they hear the Words of God's Curse, *though yet without Christ*, who can only redeem them from that Curse; thousands of presuming Sinners call themselves happy, when they are almost in the very depths of Misery, having but a short step, the thin Partition of an earthly House, betwixt them and Hell; they think their Condition to be safe and good, and applaud and please themselves in it as such, when it is as dangerous and as bad, as it can be, on this side of Everlasting Destruction. But however mistaken and deceived such Men are, we know that Christ is true, and what says he here? *Blessed art thou*

Simon, &c. for my Father hath revealed unto thee, which Flesh and Blood hath not, q. d. Thou art infallibly blessed upon this account, this is an undoubted Evidence and means of thy being so. Where then is the blessedness which the Text speaks of? What does it consist in, and how does it appear?

1. 'Tis a blessed discovery which God makes, and a blessed Knowledge, which it produces, because it is always accompanied with pardoning Grace. If there be a blessed Man in the World, without Controversie it is the pardoned Sinner. Afflictions may remain, without injuring our blessedness, so long as Sin does not remain, which is the only Thing, that can separate from the Love of Christ, and how can this separate, when God hath put it away, and removed it from us? Who will not say, *Amen* therefore to what *David* says, *Psalms* 32. 1. *Blessed is the Man whose Transgression is forgiven, &c.* Sin laies the Foundation of the Creatures Misery, consequently in the forgiveness of Sin, the Foundation of our Misery is destroyed. Now this is always done, where Jesus Christ is savingly made known. This is plain, *Heb.* 10. 16, 17. *This is the Covenant which I will make with them, &c. I will put my Laws into their Hearts, and in their Minds will I write them; and (immediately it follows) Their Sins and Iniquities will I remember no more.* When there is this promised writing within us, we may be sure, there is a blotting out of the hand-writing against us. Where Sin is uncover'd, the Heart is hid from Understanding; but where the sealed Book of Gospel-Mystery is open'd, 'tis past all question that the Debt-book is cross'd.

2. 'Tis

2. 'Tis always attended with a perfect justifying Righteousness. This is absolutely necessary, in order to blessedness; for there must be a Restitution of our lost Title, before there can be a restoring to our forfeited Inheritance. 'Tis not possible that any one should reign in Life, that does not receive of this Gift by Jesus Christ, *Rom. 5. 17, 18, 21.* On the other hand blessedness is certainly entailed hereupon; *Chap. 4. 6. Even as David describes the blessedness of the Man to whom God imputeth Righteousness without Works.* Nothing can be more manifest, than that the Justification of a Sinner is by the Imputation of the Obedience of Christ, without any respect to Works performed by the Sinner himself, and that the Sinner so justified, is truly blessed. Now 'tis as manifest, that every one who is Divinely and Spiritually illuminated, is thus blessed. God never gave the Armour of Light to one Soul, but what he also cloathed with this Robe of Righteousness. As the same Soul is always both blind and naked, so the Eye-salve and the white Raiment, which Christ Counsels to buy of him, go together, *Rev. 3. 17, 18.* Indeed we are justified by the Knowledge of Christ instrumentally, *Isa. 53. 11.* For Faith which applies his Righteousness includes such a Knowledge.

3. It hath always the Priviledge of Adoption going along with it. All blessedness is enclosed within the Family of God; strangers have nothing of it, but Children only. Every Man and Woman in the World, is a most wretched undone Creature, as He and She is a Son and Daughter of *Adam*; there can be no relief for us, but by the Contracting of a new Relation; they

which be of Faith, *are blessed with faithful Abraham*; Gal. 3. 9. How blessed? *Ye are all the Children of God by Faith in Christ Jesus*, ver. 26. Here comes in the recovery of our Blessedness, by being made the Children of God, adopted into the Household of Faith. Now, to whom does *Christ give Power to become the Sons of God*, but to as many as receive him? John 1. 12. and who are they that receive Christ, but they that are brought by God to know him? For the World that receiv'd him not, knew him not, ver. 10, 11. The Devil blinds *the minds of them that believe not*, 2 Cor. 4. 4. Natural blindness is the Cause of your Unbelief, as Judicial blindness is the Consequent. Wherever there is the sound Knowledge of Christ, there will be holy Trust in him, and where this is, there is honourable Sonship. Every Child of Light is a Child of God; if he hath visited you with the Day-spring, you may boldly call him Father.

4. Divine Purity is chain'd to this blessed discovery. The filth of Sin makes the Soul miserable, as well as the guilt of it. The Remnants of Corruption made *Paul* cry out of his being a *wretched Man*, Rom. 7. 24. They make us wretched in Part, as long as we are here, though called to be Saints; but the Sinner who continues all over polluted, is only wretched. Darkness and defilement are inseparable; while Men are groping in their natural State, they wallow in the Mire. But Purity of Heart gives a claim to blessedness, Mat. 5. 8. And wherever God shines into the Mind, he purifies the Heart. The Sun of Righteousness hath cleansing, as well as healing in his Wings. 'Tis an amazing Consideration, what dirt is carried out

of the Soul, when Light springs into it. Our Lord's Prayer speaks home to this Purpose, *John 17. 17. Sanctifie them through thy Truth, &c.* Error, as well as Ignorance is a Minister of Sin; but every Truth in Jesus tends to sanctifie, and is actually serviceable in the Sanctification of those to whom it is revealed. *Beholding the*
Glory of the Lord, changes us into his spotless I-
mage, 2 Cor. 3. 18. The Information which is given concerning Christ, hath a transforming influence upon those that are Christs.

5. Spiritual Liberty follows this blessed discovery. How much of the Happiness of humane Life is generally esteem'd to consist in outward Liberty! How irksome is Confinement and Restraint to all! How is a poor Vassal and Slave lookt upon, with a disdainful Eye by the most, with a compassionate Eye by the best! How do Men hug themselves in the little Immunities and Freedoms of this World? But what a blessed Thing is it (how much more blessed) to be rescued from the servitude of the Devil, and deliver'd from the bondage of Corruption! The darkness of a sinful State hath its Chains, as well as the darkness of Hell, 2 Pet. 2. 4. When *Sampson's* Eyes were put out, he was bound with Fetters of Brass, *Judg. 16. 21.* So it is with every unenlightened Sinner; he is under the Arbitrary command of Lust, and taken Captive by Satan at his Will; the Powers of darkness are his Keepers, and he hath no way of escape out of their Hands. But Light and Liberty come together by Christ, deliverance to the Captives, and recovering of sight to the Blind, *Luke 4. 18.* When he opens our Eyes, he opens our Prisons; *John 8. 32. You shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free.* 6. This

6. This kind of Knowledge, flowing from the special discoveries which God makes to the Soul, is no less than Eternal Life; which is the sum, the complement, the top-stone of a Creatures blessedness. We cannot be more blessed than this makes us. To lay hold upon Eternal Life, is our utmost aim, and our highest Attainment. *Now, this is Life Eternal to know God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, John 17. 3.* It was said of old, by those that had visible Divine Appearances, *We shall surely dye, because we have seen God, Judg. 13. 22.* On the contrary, where these inward Manifestations are, we may cry out, we shall surely Live, because we have seen God in the Face of Christ. He that eats of this Tree of Knowledge, lives for ever, the present Fruit of this Tree, is the first Fruits of Heaven; 'tis Eternal Life in the Seed, and in the Blossom; 'tis the City of the living God, the heavenly *Jerusalem* coming down from God into the Soul. When the Understanding is open'd to take in the Things of Christ, 'tis a true opening of the Heavens to us. *Eph. 1. 17, 18. That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give unto you the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation, in the Knowledge of him, &c. That you may know what is the hope of his Calling, and what the Riches of the Glory of his Inheritance in the Saints.*

V. Why is blessedness annexed to such Knowledge as this? Why is it limited to the Father's revealing of those Things, which Flesh and Blood cannot, and more particularly this Truth of the Godhead; which is not discoverable by Reason, but by him alone.

I. Bless-

1. Blessedness is not attainable by the meer Principles of natural Religion, however, clearly known, and firmly believed. They that go no further than Nature will carry them, must needs come short of the Glory of God. The Knowledge of natural Truths, is as insufficient as the performance of Moral Duties; and supernatural Instruction is as indispensibly needful, as Evangelical Obedience. The World is as unable to know God to any Purpose by their own Wisdom, as to serve him with Acceptance by their own Strength, 1 *Cor.* 1. 21. The Light of Nature may leave Men without excuse, but yet it leaves them also, without the effectual Remedy; it discovers so much as will aggravate Men's Ruine, but not so much as will procure their Relief. There must be the Faith of Things above Reason, for no other Faith will save. Reason, as now maim'd and corrupted, is a fallen Star, which instead of leading unto Christ, will plunge the Souls, that are under his Conduct, into outer Darknesh. If a Man had all the Knowledge which 'tis possible for Flesh and Blood to arrive to, he would be as far from the Kingdom of God, as the most illiterate Person in the World. 'Tis Light from Heaven which prevents our falling into the Fire of Hell. *If our Gospel be bid, 'tis bid to them that are lost,* 2 *Cor.* 4. 3. The Understanding of all other Mysteries will avail us nothing, if we be ignorant of this.

2. The Godhead of Jesus Christ is an Article of peculiar importance to the Everlasting welfare of Souls. 'Tis a fundamental Truth, and they that would subvert our Faith in this particular, seem to say as those *Edomites* did, in *Jerusalem's*

rusalem's desolating Day, Rase it, rase it to the Foundation thereof, Psalm 137. 7. 'Tis the Corner-stone in our Religion, upon which the Building stands. It was the very first Doctrine that we hear of from the Mouth of Paul after his Conversion, Acts 9. 20. Straightway he Preached Christ in the Synagogues, that he is the Son of God. The whole New Testament Church is oblig'd to have a special regard to this Confession of Peter, in the Words before the Text; for in the Words immediately following the Text, our Lord says, Upon this Rock will I Build my Church, ver. 18. It is therefore a most important Article; but this will further appear, if we consider these Four Things.

1. We can have no hope of Salvation, but by Christ, as the Son of the Living God. If he were but a Man, we might justly put the Question, How shall this Man save us? *How can Israel be saved with an Everlasting Salvation, but in the Lord? in Jehovah, Isa. 45. 17.* How is it true, that he would save them by the Lord their God, *Hos. 1. 7.* If there be not Salvation in any other, but Christ, he therefore must be the Lord our God.

2. We can have no access to God, or Communion with him, but by a Mediator, who is God. How should one Creature introduce another into the Presence of such a terrible Majesty, who is at an infinite distance from all Creatures? The Fellowship which we have with the Father, is through the Son; and therefore the Holy Ghost is pleas'd to link the greatest intimacy with God, to a sincere Confession of the Deity of Christ, *1 John 4. 15.*

3. We can look for no Victory over the Devil,

vil, if we do not look to Christ as God. How is the Accuser of the Brethren cast down, but by the coming of the Kingdom of our God, and the Power of his Christ? Rev. 12. 10. He must be the Christ of God, who hath Power enough to subdue and conquer such an Adversary. 'Tis the Lord that must rebuke him, a created Angel cannot, Jude 9.

4. The World it self will be too hard for us, if we are not helpt to encounter it by Christ as God, 1 John 5. 5. *Who is he that overcometh the World, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?* 'Tis in the Strength of this Faith that we must make successful Opposition; we are Conquerors by Vertue of his Conquest, John 16. 33. And this Conquest supposes his Godhead; for a meer Man is as incapable of overcoming the World, as of invading Heaven.

There is an Objection lying against all this, in the very Chapter, where the Text is; ver. 20. If the Knowledge and Belief of what Peter had now confess'd be so essential to Blessedness, why should Christ charge his Disciples, at the very close of this Discourse, *That they should tell no Man that Jesus was the Christ?* Was he unwilling that the necessary means of Salvation should be afforded to that Age? Was he resolv'd to Conceal that from them, the Concealment whereof must needs be Mortal?

Ans. 1. That unbelieving Generation were willingly, yea, wilfully Ignorant, and therefore justly given up to be so, Mat. 13. 13. *Therefore spake Jesus to them in Parables, because they seeing, see not, and hearing, they hear not, &c.* They shut their Eyes, stopt their Ears, put away the Word from them, and therefore why should it be offer'd or propos'd to them?

2. The

2. The personal Doctrine and Miracles of Christ were sufficient to have convinc'd them of this Truth, if they had given heed to them; therefore why should the Apostles Preach the same thing? *He spake as never Man spake; John 7. 46.* He did the Works, which no Man ever did, *Chap. 15. 14.* So that in Effect he told them himself, but they would not believe.

3. There might be a prudential Reason in it; Christ would not by such a Publication hasten his own Death. Some think on the contrary, he forbid their telling of this, that it might not hinder his Death; *Because if they had known, they would not have Crucified, &c. 1 Cor. 2. 8.* But this seems much the more probable Reason; he would not draw upon him the Odium and Malice of the Jews before the Time; so *Luke 9. 21, 22.* *He straitly commanded them to tell no Man that thing; saying, the Son of Man must suffer many Things, &c. q. d.* This will provoke their Rage against me, which I must and will undergo, when my hour comes, but till then I design to avoid it. The Jews had a bloody Intention in urging him to tell them plainly, *If he was the Christ, John 10, 24.* *That they might accuse him of Treason and Blasphemy;* and therefore he would answer them as they desir'd; but when his Time was come, he owned this in express Terms to the High-Priest, *Mat. 26. 63, 64.* *I adjure thee by the Living God, that thou tells us, &c. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said.*

4. The great Proof of his Godhead was yet to come; viz. his Resurrection; so the Apostles were to defer their Declaration of this Truth, till they could back it with this Argument, *Rom. 1. 4.* *He was declared to be the Son of God*

God with Power, according to the Spirit of Holiness, by the Resurrection from the Dead. By the Spirit of Holiness here, is to be understood, his Divine Nature, which is put in Opposition to the Flesh, his humane Nature, *ver. 3.* And the like Opposition we meet with, *1 Tim. 3. 16. 1 Pet. 3. 18.* Now this Deity of Christ was most powerfully demonstrated by his rising from the Dead; for he rais'd and reviv'd himself, which a Creature could not do; he had Power to take his Life again, after he had laid it down, which no Creature ever had, *John 10. 18.* And it was not possible that he should be held by the Bands of Death, of which there is possibility enough as to any Creature, *Acts 2. 24.*

VI. Use. This Doctrine will hint many things which are proper both for our Learning, and Practise.

1. There are several Things which we have to Learn from hence. As 1. The Contemnners of Divine Revelation, are miserable forsakers of their own Mercies. *He that refuseth Instruction, despiseth his own Soul, Prov. 15. 32.* This is most true, of such as turn their backs with scorn upon the Gospel of Christ; and such a sort of Men, there are at this Day in the World, that bid insolent defiance to all reveal'd Religion. The Disciples at *Antioch* chose to be called Christians, in Honour of their Lord, on whom they believed, but *England* and *London* hath bred a race of Monsters, that affect the differencing Name of Deists. What will the end of such be? What can it be but Destruction, when Faith founded on the Scripture, is the only saving Wisdom? *2 Tim. 3. 15. From a Child thou hast known*

known the Holy Scripture, which are able to, &c

2. It ought to cause no Prejudice against real Christianity, that the celebrated Men of Learning and Reason embrace it not. The Case is clear; our heavenly Father reveals these Things to all that know them, and he thinks fit to hide them from such, *Mat: 11. 25, 26. I thank thee, Oh Father, &c. Because thou hast hid these Things from the Wise and Prudent, and hast revealed them unto Babes; Even so, Father, for so it seemed good, &c. 'Tis no wonder therefore that not many wise Men after the Flesh are called, 1 Cor. 1. 26.* No wonder that there are so few, who will in any wise believe, what the Gospel declares; the Doctrine of Regeneration was mysterious nonsense (as one says) to *Nicodemus*, an eminent *Pharisee*, a Ruler of the *Jews*, a Master in *Israel*, so are other Things of the like kind to other Men.

3. It is no recommending Character of any Doctrine, that it is pleasing and suitable to Flesh and Blood. We have Reason to be Jealous that it is no spiritual Truth, which the natural Man very readily receives. The Doctrines which are promoted and countenanc'd by Flesh and Blood, have the suspicious Mark upon them of accursed Doctrines. 'Tis no Argument why I should give Credit to this or that Opinion, because 'tis grateful to Nature, but rather an Argument against it. The swift progress of Error is owing very much to its smooth Concurrence with the Stream of Nature. Nature leads all Men to build upon self; but Christ will profit that Man nothing, who expects to profit by any thing besides him. 'Tis ill judging after the Flesh; *John 8. 15.* They judge best and most wisely, that judge contrary to it.

4. Visible and nominal Christians may sit in darkness and the shadow of Death, as well as perfect *Pagans*. 'Tis a Light within us (in a sober, not Enthusiastick Sense) which is the true Light of Life. Men may live as much upon the Borders of Hell, where the Light outwardly shines, as where it shines not. The generality of the People in *Judea* receiv'd no more good by the Ministry of Christ, than they in the remotest Parts of the World, that never had it, *John* 1. 5. *The Light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.* The real Mystery of the Gospel may be as little understood by Multitudes of Persons here, as it is in the wildest Places of *America*.

5. Christians are oblig'd to know, as well as do, more than others. As we must do all the good that other Men do, and more, so we must know all the considerable Truths, that they know, and more. 'Tis said of *Heathens*, *Rom.* 1. 19. *That which may be known of God, is manifest in them, for God hath shewed it unto them.* But there is a great deal more than this to be known by those that Name the Name of Christ; or else, wo unto them. Thou believest that there is one God, thou dost well; but this is not enough. *Dost thou believe on the Son of God?* This is requir'd, and this was first ask of that Excommunicate Person by Christ, *John* 9. 35. Unless thou knowest and believest more than all the Men in the World can teach thee, or learn of themselves, thou art condemned already.

6. It is both a fruitless and a needless Thing to intrude into what we have not seen; as Persons that are vainly pufft up by their fleshly Minds,

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Col. 2. 18. It becomes us to be fully satisfied in what God is pleas'd to reveal or hide, and to pry no further, than Scripture-light Points out our way. This should stop the curiosity of our enquiring Minds, that we may not demand any account of Things, but what God sees good to give us. There is blessedness tied to his discoveries, but we make our selves oftentimes more unhappy by our own. He that increaseth Prophetical Knowledge particularly, increaseth Sorrow, *2 Kings 8. 11, 12. The Man of God wept; and Hazael said, why, &c.*

2. There are some Things which this does very fitly put us upon the Practice. As

1. It speaks to Sinners, and shews what they should do.

1. See your Wretchedness. You cannot be blessed, till the Father gives you a Revelation of his Son by his Spirit. Without this Knowledge, the Soul cannot be good; all that perish are destroyed for lack of it. The external Form of Knowledge which you have, will be insignificant to you. The Devils knew that he was Christ, and proclaim'd him to be the Son of God; but Christ rebuk'd them and would not receive any Testimony from them; it was unacceptable to him, and unserviceable to themselves, *Luke 4. 41.* And an heartless Confession out of the Mouth of an Hypocrite, is as bad as from the Mouth of a Devil.

2. Be earnest with God for the Cure of your Blindness. None can do it, but he; he can and will, if you unfeignedly beg it of him. The Promise lies ready for you to Plead, and he is ready to perform it, *Prov. 2. 3, 4, 5. If thou cryest after Knowledge, and liftest up thy Voice for*
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Understanding, &c. Then shalt thou understand the Fear of the Lord, and find the Knowledge of thy God. You may ask saving Wisdom, so as not to be denied; if you ask it as Persons sensible, that your Life is bound up in this Request, and if you ask it for Christ's sake; for it was his Errand and End in coming into the World, *That they which see not, might see,* John 9. 39.

2. This speaks to *Believers*, and shews what they have to do.

1. Lift up your Heads and Hearts this Day with thankfulness to Heaven. This good News to those that have heard Christ, and been taught by him, loudly calls them to give Glory to God in the highest, *Psalms 118. 27. God is the Lord, who hath shewed us Light* (even Jesus Christ who is spoken of, *ver. 22. The great Light of the World*) *bind the Sacrifice with Cords, &c. in Judah is God known,* Psalm 76. 1. *Judah* signifies Praise; what Hearts should they have to Praise God, that have Understandings given them to know him; If God hath conferred this Blessedness upon you, what a rebounding of Blessing should there be to him.

2. Value no Knowledge in Comparison of this. Remember the Words of *Paul, 1 Cor. 2. 2.* This exceeds all other Knowledge in many respects, especially because it discriminates the Friends of God from Enemies. 'Tis a distinguishing Priviledge allow'd to none, but the beloved of the Lord. Though you have no Reason to boast your selves against others, whom God makes you to differ from, yet you have abundant Reason to prefer and magnifie your own Lot. *Mat. 13. 15, 16. This People's Heart is waxed gross, and their Ears are dull, and*
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their Eyes closed, &c. But blessed are your Eyes for they see, &c.

3. *Walk as Children of Light.* Necessity is laid upon them, *That are Light in the Lord*, to do so, *Eph. 5. 8.* Give no occasion by disorderly steps, for others to stumble and fall. As is said in another Case, *Rom. 14. 16. Let not your good be evil spoken of.* Expose not the Doctrine of Christ to reproach by any unholy Acts, as if it were not a Doctrine according to Godliness. Let all your Observers be witnesses, that a renewed Mind will produce a reformed Conversation. Else you will Cloud your own Light, and thicken the Darknes of other Men.

4. Make Conscience of Praying for those whom you usually hear. Petition the King on the behalf of his Embassadors; and the more they have of his Presence, the more are you like to get by their Labours. The more they have of the guidance of the Spirit of Truth, the more useful will their Teachings be to you. The ablest Minister of the New Testament is insufficient to think any thing of himself, *2 Cor. 3. 5, 6.* Unwearied Studies will bring forth nothing but wind without a Divine Influence. Pray therefore, that they may have *Moses's* Advantage, of God's being *with their Mouth, and Teaching them what they should say*, *Exod. 4. 12.*

5. Depend still upon God for continued discoveries. Follow on to know the Lord, and breath after further views of him. God hath not yet shewed you all that he intends. The Work of Illumination is yet going on; *The same anointing, which hath taught you, teacheth you of all Things*, *1 John 2. 27.* There are still the deep Things of God, which the Spirit must search

search out for you. Holy *David*, long after his first enlightening, beseeches God to *Open his Eyes, that he might behold wondrous things out of his Law*, Psalm 119. 18. There are always fresh Wonders to be seen, which a fresh Unction from God must help us to discern.

6. Look for the perfecting of these discoveries in a State of Glory. Say to God, as the same *David* did, *Psalms 36. 9. In thy Light shall we see Light.* 'Tis but a kind of dim Twilight comparatively, which we enjoy here in this World; while we are hid in this Prison-house, we can see but little; but our Fathers House above, is full of Light; *Then shall the Righteous shine forth as the Sun, &c. Mat. 13. 43.* If the Day-star be ris'n in your Hearts, live in the pleasant and chearful Expectation of perfect Day. For we can ascend but a little way into the Mysteries of the Kingdom, as long as we are upon the Foot-stool; and we shall know vastly and unconceivably more in the first Moment after we come to Heaven, then we are capable of attaining here throughout all our Days.

SERMON III.

July 16. 1695.

PSLAM XXVI. iii.

*For thy Loving Kindness is before mine
Eyes : And I have walked in thy Truth.*

THE Time of composing this *Psalms*, seems to be, before *David's* coming to the Kingdom, but after God had given him the right of Succession, when he was maliciously persecuted by *Saul*, and as unjustly defamed by his flattering Courtiers. And this was the probable occasion of his solemn Appeal here to the Judgment of God, who knew not only the Righteousness of his Cause in this particular Point, but also of his general Course. There are various Expressions to this Purpose, *ver. 1, 2*. But the Reason and Ground of this Confidence, is set forth in the Words of the Text ; *For thy Loving Kindness is before mine Eyes, &c.*

Here are Four Things which need a little Explication.

1. *What we are to understand by the Loving Kindness of God ?* The Word signifies, the Bignity, Mercy, Grace of God, and may be indifferently render'd by any of these Terms, which

which do all amount to the same Thing. But

1. *This Loving Kindness may be taken either for an essential Perfection in God, or some external Dispensation of good from God; that which belongs to his Nature, or that which he exercises towards his Creatures. One is to be lookt upon as the Principle, and the other as the Product; one as the Original Cause and Spring, the other as the Effect which Streams and Issues from it. In the former Sense, it may be understood, Psalm 51. 1. and in the latter Sense, Psalm 42. 8. And in both Senses here in this Place.*

2. *The Loving Kindness of God displays and exerts it self, in many Acts of Providence, but most especially in Christ, and the vouchsafement of spiritual and eternal Blessings by him. Several of God's dealings with us in Temporals, are Instances and Tokens of his Favour; and if he were not as he is said to be, Joel 2. 13. Of great Kindness, he would deal much otherwise even in those Things; but the Kindness and Love of God (that which is most eminently and distinguishingly so) appears in the Redeemer, Tit. 3. 4. All the rest is as nothing to this, and therefore this is chiefly understood here.*

3. *The Loving Kindness of God may be consider'd as respecting others, or our selves; as the Elect of God in general are the Objects of it, or as he hath made us so more particularly. Now though 'tis true, that the Favour which God bears to his People, deserves our notice and remembrance, yet we are most apt to be affected with that which he shews to us. Paul speaks of Christ's loving his Church, Eph. 5. 25. But he Triumphs in Christ's loving him, Gal. 2. 20. So that when David says here, Thy Loving*

Kindness, he means, Thy Loving Kindness to me.

2. *What it is for God's Loving Kindness to be before our Eyes?* 'Tis a way of Expression which this Holy Man after God's Heart uses elsewhere; *Psalms 16. 8. I have set the Lord always before me.* And it implies these Four Things in it.

1. *To have it before our Eyes, is duely to apprehend it.* So David speaks of *Understanding the Loving Kindness of the Lord, Psalm 107. ult.* If we have no Knowledge of it, it can have no Influence upon us; and that which is *hid from our Eyes*, in the Scripture stile, we are said not to know, *Luke 19. 42.*

2. *To believe it, and be persuaded of it.* Infidelity makes Men hide their Faces from Christ, *Isa. 53. 3.* They that give no Credit to him, and have no Dependance on him, do not Care so much as to look towards him. But where Faith is exercised, the Eye is fixed; and therefore Believing is very often exprest in the New Testament by Seeing, *John 8. 56. Heb. 11. 13.*

3. *To Esteem and Prize it.* As the casting of the Word behind us, *Psalms 50. 17.* is an evidence of Contempt, so the keeping of our Eyes upon any Object, intimates the value which we have for it. And indeed, who can take a view of the height, and depth, and length, and breadth, those unmeasurable Dimensions, of the Love of Christ, *Eph. 3. 18, 19.* Without having his Heart rais'd to an Holy Admiration? so as to cry out with David, *How excellent is thy Loving Kindness, Oh God! Psalm 36. 7.*

4. *To consider it, and be seriously mindful of it.* As the Fear of God being before our Faces, *Exod. 20. 20.* Is to stand in actual awe of him,

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and to have the dread of his Majesty upon us ; so to have the *Love of God in our Eye*, is to have it imprest upon our Minds, to roul it in our Thoughts, and make it the Matter of our frequent Meditation. As the Spouse says to Christ, *We will remember thy Love, &c. Song 1. 4.*

3. *What is meant by God's Truth here ?* It is capable of a Threefold Sense.

1. *The Truth of God may import his immutable faithfulness.* So *Psalms 89. 49 91. 4.* And many other Places. God is a God of Truth, and all Creatures compar'd with him, are a Lye.

2. *His Truth may signifie his Word ; which is called the Truth,* *Psalms 119. 142.* And his Truth, *John 17. 17.* As being given by his Inspiration, and containing in it the Counsel of his Will.

3. *His Truth may denote the Sincerity of those that belong to him.* This, though inhærent in us, and acted by us, and therefore stiled our Integrity, *Prov. 20. 7.* And our Uprightness, *Isa. 57. 2.* Yet is the Truth of God, as 'tis enjoyned by him, *Psalms 51. 6.* And implanted by him also ; for all Truth is an Emanation from him, and he is the Fountain of it, as the Devil is the Father of Lyes.

4. *What is it to walk in his Truth ?*

1. *To Place our firm Reliance on the faithfulness of God.* This may be taken in as Part of the Sense ; the rather because the Psalmist makes that Profession, *ver. 1. I have trusted in the Lord ;* and because Experience of God's Kindness does embolden our Hope in his Truth ; for indeed we can take no Comfort in the faithfulness of God, except we have some Proofs of his Love. *His Kindness and Truth often go together,* but his Kindness is put first, *2 Sam. 2. 6.*

Psalm 40. 10, 11. Now, as the Phrase of walking in God's Name is used by the Holy Ghost, *Micah* 4. 5. So his Truth being a Part of his Name, we may be said to walk in that, when we confide in it.

2. *To attend strictly to the Word of God*; both as to the Doctrinal and Practicall Parts of it.

1. *As to the Doctrinal Parts of the Word*, which are the Truths, that the Spirit leads into, *John* 16. 13. Not barely into the Form of it, which is all that Hypocrites have, *Rom.* 2. 20. But into the rooted Possession. Hence this Truth is said to dwell in Believers, and be with them for ever, *2 John* 2. So that they shall not be turn'd aside, nor led away by contrary Errors.

2. *As to the Practicall Parts of the Word*, which are the Rule of Life, and call'd the way of Truth, *Psalm* 119. 30. And the Truth which is after Godliness, *Tit.* 1. 1. For all Sin is countenanced by falshood. This is the Truth which must be obey'd, *Gal.* 3. 1. *1 Pet.* 1. 22. And which we are requir'd to do, *1 John* 1. 6. For 'tis as necessary to guide our Practice by Divine Commands, as to steer our Judgments by Divine Revelation.

3. *To be upright in our Way, in Opposition to that walking in craftiness*, *2 Cor.* 4. 2. Which is the celebrated Policy of the Children of this World. This seems to be aim'd at by *David* here, because in the very next Words, *ver.* 4. He protests against going in with Dissemblers. The Curse that God hath pronounc'd against Deceivers, should make us afraid of being tinctur'd with the Leaven of Hypocrisie and Guile. Our walk is not as it should be, if the Law of Truth

do not govern our whole Conversation, as Persons whose Loins are girt about with it, *Eph.* 6. 14.

4. *Perseverance in this Course, must also be added to fill up the Sense.* How is it a walking in the Truth, if it be only taking a step, or two, and not a continued Motion? What less can it include, than a diligent Care to approve all our Ways to God to the very End of our Lives? If we do not this, we imitate the Devil, *who abode not in the Truth*, though he stood in it once, *John* 8. 44. For though the greatest Saints are too often guilty of sinful waverings and startings in their walk with God, yet the least of them is never left finally to depart from him, or to quit the Road of Duty, The Words thus open'd, afford us this Point to be insisted on.

Obf. *A deep and constant Sense of the Love of God, does most powerfully engage and quicken to steady and sincere Obedience.* The Two Parts of this *verse* are to be view'd in their Connexion, and then we shall see how clearly this Results from the whole. [*Thy Loving Kindness is before mine Eyes*] there's the Antecedent; [*And I have walked in thy Truth*;] there's the Consequent. Here,

I. Lay down some Propositions for the explaining of this Doctrine.

II. Offer some Arguments for the Proof of it.

III. Apply it.

I. To lay down some Propositions for the explaining of this Point.

I. All that pretend to an Interest in the Love of God, have not their Hearts engag'd to suitable Obedience, for by many this is falsely pretended. The Church of Ephesus whom Christ wrote unto, Tried them which said they were Apostles, and were not, and found them Lyars, Rev. 2. 2. So Multitudes that say, they are the Friends and Favourites of God, really are not, but by their own Practices discover themselves Lyars. If they do not walk in God's Truth, 'tis most certain that they have not his *Loving Kindness before their Eyes*. Vile carnal Wretches too often delude themselves in this Case, and the Delusion is very strong, though it be so gross and palpable. If any Man say, that he hath found Grace in the sight of God, who makes little or no Conscience of Duty to God, we must say, as John does on a like occasion, *The Truth is not in him*, 1 John 2. 4. To say that I shall have Peace, though I have no regard to Holiness, and that God will make me up among his brightest Jewels, tho I lye wallowing in the Mire still, is impudently to give the Lye to the whole Bible, as if we knew the Mind of Christ better than himself. Such Imaginations as these are Oils that break the Head, and sweeten'd Draughts that cast into a dead sleep. Sinners that Prophecy such smooth Things to themselves, Prophesie pernicious Deceits. The Visions of their own Hearts will end in outer Darkness. They boast that God is well pleas'd in them, though they take no delight in serving of him; and they rejoyce in this boasting; but their Foundation is in the Sand; they are not true Men, but counterfeits.

2. *All have not a full and uninterrupted Assurance of the Love of God, who do never the less yield the most unfeigned Obedience.* God does not always put gladness into those Hearts, where he puts his fear; nor always make his Face to shine, where he hath restor'd his Image. *Though every one that doth right is born of God,* 1 John 2. 29. Yet every such Person does not certainly know that his Father's Heart is towards him. Some may live under his Frowns, that yet live under his Authority; they may be too great Strangers to rejoycing in God, and yet will not renounce their Subjection to God; though they want the *Light of his Countenance*, yet *his Law is a Lamp to their Feet*. This is the Case of those upright Souls, *That walk trembling after the Lord*, Hof. 11. 10. They are ready sometimes to suspect that God will have nothing to do with them, and yet they are resolv'd to cleave to him; they walk so as to please him, though they have not like *Enoch*, the Testimony of their pleasingness to him. God seems to be angry, and covers himself with a Cloud, and they are tempted to put the Question, whether *God's tender Mercies be not quite shut up*; but notwithstanding all this, they remember to do the Part of Children, they will perform the Duties of such a Relation, whether he own them or not. The Generation of the Righteous make up but a very few, in Comparison of that numerous World which lye in Wickedness, but we should make them a great deal fewer then they are, if we shut out those, that are sometimes at least, destitute of Divine Comfort. The Practice of universal Obedience is very Rare, but a strong and unshaken Assurance

urance of Faith is much more Rare.

3. *The Natural Man that looks upon God as an implacable biter of him, can never heartily obey him.* The serving of enemies is threatned by God as a punishment, *Deut.* 28. 48. And 'tis that which Nature hath a great reluctancy against, and will not be brought to submit to, but by force. Conscience of Guilt, and fear of Wrath, do not promote our walking with God, but obstruct it. *Adam* ran away from God as soon as he had sinned, and would never have return'd to perform any act of Allegiance to him any more, if God had not reveal'd himself in Christ, and entred into a Covenant of Peace through a Mediator. When a Sinner sees that God is against him, and concludes (as 'tis said in the case of the *Leviathan*, *Job* 41. 9.) that the hope of him is in vain, he will have no respect to any Command of God. A Man in a desperate Condition, that thinks there is no Remedy, will break all Rules and Measures; he will be tied to nothing, because he is under such dismal Apprehensions that nothing can help him, A Spirit of slavish fear, which all awakened Sinners are naturally possess'd with till God shew them his Salvation, tends rather to plunge Men headlong into Hell, than to make them choose the way to Heaven; it is far more likely to harden them in their Rebellion, than to reduce them to their Obedience, if there were nothing but the terrour of the Lord to be known, Conversion-Work would be impossible.

4. *The warmer our sense is of Gods love to us, the livelier is our obedience to him.* There is some proportion between the vigour of our service, and our hopeful prospect of his favour. Upon this

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this account there is not only a difference as to degrees of Holiness among Saints themselves (because though they have all *obtain'd like precious faith*, they have not all obtain'd *equal measures of faith*, 2 Pet. 1. 1. compar'd with Rom. 12. 3.) but there is also a difference in the same Saints at several seasons, according as they have more or less of the comfortable apprehensions of the *love of God* (which is indeed a variable thing, I mean not the *love of God it self*, but our *apprehension* of it) they are more or less *fervent in Spirit serving the Lord*. Though Duty be not intermitted (nor ever should be) for want of comfort, yet in the enjoyment of comfort, Duty is perform'd in a more active and chearful manner. Every Child of God hath his *dark and gloomy*, as well as his *bright and pleasant days*; and this change, as to his spiritual joy, will produce some alteration in the *exercise of Grace*. The less sensible Manifestations of God there are to the soul, the more sensible deadness there is in holy Duties. Our Wings are clipt, and we cannot mount up, as at other times; but when we receive the sight of a reconcited God in Jesus Christ, this wonderfully enlarges the heart, and we can not only *walk in Gods Truths*, but *run in the way of his Commandments*.

5. Though a *sence of the love of God* do quicken to obedience; yet there is a *necessity of obedience* laid upon us by *vertue of the Law*; for the *Law is not made void through this faith*, but *establisht*, Rom. 3. 31. The Law reveals what we ought to do, and a discerned Interest in the Love of God gives us the highest encouragement to the doing of it. We are not the less, but the more obliged by
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this means, to *walk according to rule*, and that Rule is the Declared *Will of God*. Though we are helpt to obey upon Gospel Principles, yet we are bound to obey on the account of the Precept. No Man more sway'd and influenc'd by Grace than *Paul* was, yet he professes *that he was not without Law to God, but under the Law to Christ*, 1 Cor. 9. 21. We owe a Debt of *service to God*, though Christ hath discharg'd the *Debt of Sin*. He hath fulfill'd the *Law for us*, in order to our *Justification*, and yet we are to fulfil it our selves, for the evidencing of our *Sanctification*. The Law is still in force, for our direction in Duty; though Christ hath so far abolisht it, as to free Believers from the penalty, it retains its commanding power, though it hath lost its condemning power, in which respect 'tis said *that the Law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly, and for sinners*, 1 Tim. 1. 3. The threatned Curse takes hold of Men out of Christ, the Injunctions to be regarded by those in Christ.

6. *A sence of the love of God is the chief motive to Obedience, though it be not the only one.* There are other Considerations, which have their Place and Use, and ought to work upon us, but this more than any; they may and should contribute to the same end, but this is most effectual. As

1. *A Sence of God's absolute as well as relative Goodness.* I mean, to consider how good a Master he is in himself, should be an inducement to serve him; as 'tis possible that some may be willing to do service to an extraordinary Person, from a respect to his inherent Worth. The *Matchless Excellencies of God*, whom none in Heaven or Earth can be likened to, should in-

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vite us to take a pleasure in his work; it should be our *meat and drink* to do the Will of such an one, for the sake of what he is; for the glorifying of him who is so glorious, must needs be our own Glory.

2. *A sense of God's Sovereignty and Dominion over us.* Who can refuse to yield himself to God, that is seriously convinc'd of his infinite Right to command and govern him? He may challenge from us all that we can do; for both our Being and active Power is from him. He hath made us for himself; and we may as well disown his being our Creator, as deny him to be our Ruler; but what kind of Ruler do we make him, if we are not his servants to obey? Subjection follows upon Dominion, or is implied in it: *He is the Lord, and worship thou him,* Psal. 45. 11.

3. *The consideration of the purity of the precepts which God calls us to observe.* This made the Word of God so amiable to David, Psal. 119. 140. It requires nothing of us but what highly becomes us, and behoves us; nothing but what 'tis our Honour and Interest to comply with. The *work of God* is of the noblest kind, such as none but a filthy depraved Creature would desire to be exempted from. Paul therefore magnifies the Holiness, Justice, and Goodness of the Law, Rom. 7. 12. And upon that score expresses his Consent to it, ver. 16. And delight in it, ver. 22.

4. *The Consideration of the Reward which we enjoy in Obedience at present, and which is reserv'd for us hereafter.* These are proper encouraging Thoughts, and should recommend our Duty to us. The Reward which attends our doing it is

is great; the Reward which is laid up, till we have done it, is greater; and this would not be so far revealed as it is, but that it might be a spur to us, *Col. 3. 23, 24. Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, &c. knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the Reward of the Inheritance, &c.* He that hath the Hope of such a promis'd blessedness, should be excited by it to universal Holiness. And yet the main Argument of all is the Love of God.

II. *To offer some Proofs for the Demonstration of this Truth. As.*

1. *No Man hath such a Sense of the Love of God, but the Elect Sinner upon his return to God; he is the only Subject of it. And therefore it must needs very powerfully engage to Obedience.*

1. *None but the Elect Sinner hath a true Sense of the Love of God.* This Treasure is put only into chosen Vessels; this hidden Manna is only for God's hidden ones, and consequently there is no danger of its corrupting, but it will certainly nourish Grace, and strengthen to Duty. *As none but they that are written in the Lamb's Book enter into Heaven, Rev. 21. ult.* So this Heaven upon Earth does not enter into any others. There are a peculiar number whom God hath set his Love upon, and this peculiar number are the only Persons whom he manifests it to; *The anointing which teacheth us all things, is Truth and no Lye, 1 John 2. 27.* How then can they be taught the Knowledge of God's Love, whom his Soul hates? And on the other Hand how can they turn this against the Interest of Holiness, who are chosen that they might be Holy?

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2. *Elect Sinners have not such a Sense, but when they are upon their return to God.* When Christ is about to be formed in the Soul, those discoveries of the *Love of God* do greatly promote and help it forward; if they have been Enemies in their Minds, they shall not continue such; If they have done Iniquity, they shall do no more; they shall not go on in their Trespasses, after the *Grace of God* is so display'd in their Remission. The white Stone is too great a Jewel to be cast before those filthy Swine, that will turn again and rend, or trample it under their Feet. The chosen of God themselves have it not, till God is calling them home to himself. The Time of Conversion is the Time of Love, *Ezek. 16. 8.* The Time not only of God's Exercising, but manifesting Love to the Sinner.

2. *None can impress such a Sense of God's Love upon us, but the Spirit of God;* he is the only Author of it, and therefore it must needs quicken to Obedience. False hopes and groundless Comforts, which do tend indeed to the Patronizing and Encouraging of Sin, arise from our selves and from the Devil; but the Consolations of God, which always produce *Holiness to the Lord*, are from the Spirit, as he Works *Love to God in us*, so he witnesses *God's Love to us*. As we cannot see the Sun but by its own Light. So we cannot see the Face of God with Joy, but by a beam from himself. We can no more know that God is at Peace with us, meerly by our own Understandings, than we can reconcile our selves to him by the Power of our own Wills; our Hearts are naturally like an Hell; as there is a burning Fire of insatiable Lust, so biting Worms of endless Fears. The stupid Sinner is

hard to be Convinced, and the Convinced Sinner refuses to be Comforted. We are as far from the applying of Promises, as from hearkening to Precepts; and as we cannot be subject to the Law, so we can get no relief by the Gospel. But the blessed Spirit, he does both *let us know the Things which are freely given us of God*; 1 Cor. 2. 12. And also the Things which are indispensibly requir'd of us by God; we should never know that God is our Father, without this Spirit of Adoption. *The Love of God is shed abroad in our Hearts by the Holy Ghost*, Rom. 5. 5. And as he diffuses it there, so he improves it to Holy Purposes; his sanctifying Operations are always befriended and assisted by his Comforting Testimonies.

S E R.

SERMON IV.

July 30. 1695.

PSALM XXVI. iii.

*For thy Loving Kindness is before mine
Eyes : And I have walked in thy Truth.*

3. **T**HE Promises which Declare and Confirm the Love of God to us, are special means of working Holiness in us. As they assure our Deliverance from Wrath, so they promote our Salvation from Sin. Divine Promises do not only tend to beget us to a lively Hope, but they help to produce and maintain the Life of every Grace; they are the spiritual Food of Souls, which does both nourish our Faith, and strengthen us to Obedience. We do not obtain any Gospel Priviledge by the Performance of Duty, but Duty is effectually enforced by the Enjoyment of Gospel Priviledges. God brings us to take hold of his gracious Covenant, and thereby fortifie us against turning from the Holy Commandment. This is plainly set forth as the Way and Method in which he first Works upon us, and enables us to Work, 2 Cor. 7. 1. *Having therefore these Promises, let us cleanse our*

selves from all filthiness both of Flesh and Spirit, &c. The Promise of God's being a Father to us (which is mention'd in the last verse of the foregoing Chapter) is a stronger Inducement to purifie our selves and be Followers of him, than any threatening of God's being a Revenger. So 2 Pet. 1. 4. *Exceeding great and precious Promises are given unto us, that by these you might be Partakers of the Divine Nature, &c.* As the chief Thing communicated from God is the Divine Nature, whereby we are made to resemble him, so the Promises of God set home upon the Soul, are the means of Communication; they are to Milk and Honey of the Scripture, which do not cherish the Old Man, but support the New; they are not Pillows for sinful Sloth, but spurs to Holy Diligence. The Promises of Grace animate the Soul to Duty; and when we thus see the goodness of the Lord, it encourages our Subjection to his Government.

4. *A Sense of the Love of God will create in us a more perfect hatred of Sin;* Divine Reconciliation to our Persons, breeds the most implacable Enmity against our Lusts; when we know that God is pacified towards us, it makes us loath and abhor our selves the more, in remembrance of the Evils we have done. If he passes by Transgression, the pardoned Transgressor fixes his Eye upon it with greater Indignation; as *David's Sin was ever before him*, though *Nathan* had told him from God, that his Sin was put away, *Psalms* 51. 3. compar'd with 2 *Sam.* 12. 13. For the Title of that Psalm informs us, that it was penn'd after *Nathan* the Prophet had come to *David*. A Sinner is never so odious in his own sight, as when he is persuaded of his being

being precious in the sight of God. How does *Paul* repeat and aggravate the foul Abominations of his natural Pharisaical State, when he knew himself to be belov'd of God, and established in Christ; he speaks of his persecuting and wasting the Church of God beyond measure, *Gal. 1. 13.* So with Holy Confusion he bewails what he once was, *after he had obtained Mercy, and after the Grace of our Lord Jesus had exceedingly abounded towards him, 1 Tim. 1. 13, 14.* Though God had made him whiter than Snow in the Lamb's Blood, yet he still sets out himself in his own black and filthy Colours. We do not lose the Prospect of our own vileness, by having the *Kindness and Love of God before our Eyes*, but we see it the better. His gracious Absolution kindles the most flaming Zeal and Revenge in us against the Sins from which we are absolved; consequently is a mighty furtherance of our Obedience.

5. *A Sense of the Love of God is most apt to beget an awful fear of Falling under his displeasure.* That I may not be mistaken, let it be consider'd,

1. *That this awful Fear is not only distinct from dreadful Horrour, but opposite unto it.* The trembling of a Devil, and the trembling of a Child are real Contraries. Godly jealousy of our selves, and sinful Distrust of God, are two things of most different Kinds. The fear of Caution (which I would recommend) keeps us walking closely with God, the fear of Desperation (which I would warn against) hurries us violently away from God.

2. *That this displeasure of God, which Believers are lyable to fall under, is exercis'd only in this*

World, and not in the next. That Wrath which God occasionally lets out against his own, is not the same with that which comes *upon the Children of disobedience*, Eph. 5. 6. We must not confound the temporary hidings of God's Face, with Everlasting Destruction from God's Presence. He that believes, is secur'd from final Condemnation, but nevertheless he is still incident to sad Desertion. Now for the Soul to be kept under the awe of this, is a great help to our Obedience; and where the Love of God is perceived by the Soul, this awe will certainly prevail. God's sanctified ones can say it from Experience, *Psalm 130. 4. There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayst be feared.* Not only a readiness to forgive, but actual forgiveness is with God; and as our Fear of God is the end of his granting it, so 'tis the effect and issue of our receiving it.

Two Things will make this more evident,

1. *This joyful Sense of the Love of God, supposes a sorrowful Sense of his displeasure going before it.* Ordinarily God does not thus set Men up on high, till he hath first brought them into the Depths; he does not make them glad with his Countenance, till he had laid them (more or less) in the lowest Pit, *Psalm 88. 6.* How few are admitted to take the Cup of Salvation, without Drinking for some time of the Cup of God's Fury! How few are call'd into this pleasant light, without passing through a scorching Fire? Sore Conflicts prepare the way, for the most part, to ravishing Comforts; and the Heart knows a great deal of bitterness, before it comes to taste how good the Lord is.

2. *They that have been sensible of God's displeasure,*

sure, and are sensible of his Love, will take Care to avoid the one, and continue in the other. Who so likely to be afraid of receiving a Spirit of Bondage again, as they that have felt it? Who so far from provoking God to carry them back into an howling Wilderness, as they who have been there before? Who so cautious of interrupting their sweet Communion with God, as they that have enjoy'd it? Who so capable of rightly valuing that Priviledge, as they that are possessors of it, and therefore who so ready to endeavour the preserving of it by a circumspect Walk? Souls that are thus favoured of God, are most seriously convinc'd, *That in his Favour is Life*, Psalm 30. 5. Therefore when the Spirit of God hath carried them up to this Pinnacle, this height of Consolation, they are the more afraid of doing any Thing to occasion their casting down.

6. *The commonest and strongest Temptations to departing from God are best overcome by a Sense of his Love*; viz. The Temptations which arise both from the flatteries and frowns of the World, the *Love of Life*, and *Fears of Death*. He that hath the *Loving Kindness of God* before his Eyes, is most able to make a resolute and successful Resistance to all these. As particularly,

1. *The Flatteries of the World do too often allure Men from their Obedience to God*; but they that have a Sense of God's Love upon their Hearts, are best armed against this Temptation. Hereby the World, with all its gaudy Vanities, is Crucified to us, and we unto the World; hereby all these Things are stript of their seeming Glory, as the Sun puts out the lesser Lights, and

as the Works of Nature spoil the Reputation of the Works of Art, *Psalm 4. 7. Thou hast put gladness in my Heart, more than in the Time when their Corn and Wine increased.* If we had more spiritual Delight in God, carnal Fruitions must needs be a less powerful bait. 'Tis in vain for the Devil to entice that Soul with a few drops of Pleasure that run through broken Cisterns, which partakes of satisfying Refreshments from the *Fountain of Life*; these Things are only suited to the Palates of those that never know the Joy of the Lord. Heaven's Favours cannot fall in Love with Earths, 'tis natural for a Believer that's clothed with the Sun, to have the Moon under his Feet, *Rev. 12. 1.*

2. The Frowns of the World too often scare Men from their Obedience, but a due Apprehension of the Love of God, is a good Security against this Temptation also. The belief of God's reconciled Heart, and view of his pleased Countenance is enough to make us Triumph over the fiercest malignity of Men and Devils. It Matters not who they be that are against us, nor what they can do against us, so long as we know that God is for us. This will make us Glory in Infirmities, Necessities, Distresses and Afflictions of all sorts: For he that can encourage himself, with *David, 1 Sam. 30. 6. In the Lord his God,* will not be dismayed by any of these Things. Bitter Herbs will go down very well, when a Man hath such delicious Meats which the World knows not of. The Sense of our Father's Love is like Honey at the end of every Rod; it turns Stones into Bread, and Water into Wine; and the Valley of Trouble into a Door of Hope; it makes the biggest Evils seem as if they were none, or better

ter than none; for it makes our Desarts like the Garden of the Lord, and when we are upon the Cross for Christ, as if we were in *Paradise* with Christ. Who would quit his Duty, for the sake of Suffering, that hath such relief under it? Who would not rather walk in Truth, when he hath such a Cordial to support him, than by the Conduct of fleshly Wisdom, to take any indirect or irregular Methods for his own Deliverance?

3. *The Love of Life is a very frequent and pernicious Snare, which a Sense of God's Love must deliver us from being entangled by.* What so desirable as Life, if a Man have no Place in the Heart of God? This is the greatest Temporal Blessing, and nothing can out do it, but the Favour of the God of our Life. And this excels indeed; *Psalms 63. 3. Thy Loving Kindness is better than Life.* What Comparison is there between the Breath in our Nostrils, and the Favour of an Eternal God? Any more than there is between an Everlasting Light, and a poor vanishing Vapour, compare *Isa. 60. 19.* with *Jam.*

4. 14. Who would not therefore hate his own Life, which hangs in doubt continually before him, and of which he can have no Assurance, when he knows that the Living God is his certain Portion? Who would not freely yield up and part with Ten Thousand such Lives one after another (if he had so many) rather than the Wrath of God should be kindled but a little?

4. *The Fear of Death is a very usual and hurtful Snare too, which can hardly be broken without a Sense of the Love of God.* Death which will rend and tear the Soul from the Body, is the Lion in the

the way, which discourages and affrights many from hazardous Duties; thousands through sinful Cowardize have rather chosen to shipwrack their Faith, and prostitute their Conscience than mingle their Blood with their Sacrifices. But now they that have the Comforts of God to delight their Souls, are more willingly brought to this King of Terrors; if God cause his Face to shine, what should hinder our chearful descent into the Valley of the shadow of Death? Love is strong as Death, and a great deal stronger; one would dare to Dye for a good Man, whose Love and Friendship hath endear'd him to us; how much more for a God whose kindness hath been so exceeding? This hath made so many Martyrs glorifie God in the midst of the Fires; when they have been kill'd for Christ's sake all the day long, *and counted as Sheep for the slaughter, they have been more than Conquerours through him that lov'd them*, and through the lively Impression of that Love upon them, *Rom. 8. 36, 37.*

7. *The New Nature is ingenuous, and therefore will be wrought up to Obedience by the Love of God.* After we have tasted that the Lord is gracious, we readily savour all the Things of God. Humane Nature indeed in our lapsed, depraved State, may Reward Evil for Good, and Hatred for Love (as *David's Enemies* did to him, *Psal. 109. 5.*) before a saving Change is accomplish'd on the Soul; but it neither is nor can be so, when God gives Men another Heart, as he does at their New-birth. Then nothing ties us so fast to our Duty, as those bands of Love; nothing is so sweetly, and yet so strongly attractive, *Jer. 31. 3. With Loving Kindness have I drawn thee*; they that are only haled and drag'd

drag'd by legal Terror, will be striving to break away again, and loose themselves from the Yoke of Christ, but Love subdues all Things to it self; it constrains to such Acts of Duty, as make the mad World think us *beside our selves*; 2 Cor. 5. 13, 14. The Soul is compell'd to come in to Christ, and yet it walks at Liberty; 'tis so sway'd by a Principle of Holy Gratitude, as that it is always studying that Point, *What shall I render?* For this is a Principle that never fails to operate, where the Root of thankfulness is, the Fruit of Service cannot be wanting. *Therefore the Apostle beseeches by the Mercies of God, that we present our Bodies, &c. Rom. 12. 1.* Love hath a mighty prevalency in the obtaining of all that is desir'd; *Herod would do any Thing at the Request of his beloved Herodias: Esther chose that Time to perfer her Petition, when she was expressing her Love to the King in a Banquet; so when Christ is feasting a Believer with his Fat Things, with his Love which is better than Wine, the raviht Believer can deny or grudge him nothing.*

8. *That Love to God which a due Sense of the Love of God does produce in us, is virtually all Obedience.* This Consideration consists of two Branches, which (to give it the greater Evidence and Force) may be distinctly open'd.

1. *A due Sense of the Love of God to us produces Love in us to God, 1 John 4. 19. We Love him, because he first loved us. Sic res accendunt lumina rebus.* Sanctified Affections are blown up in us, by the believing Persuasions of *Divine good Will towards us.* As there is something like an exchange of Souls between Bosom Friends, so there are returns and reboundings of Love
be-

betwixt God and those, whose Hearts are knit to him. The Spouse of Christ proclaims their mutual Endearments in one Breath, and also in the right Order. *Song 2. 16. My Beloved is mine, and I am his.* God is the Ocean from which Love first flows out, and to which it always streams back. Love, when it hath descended from Heaven to Earth, hath finished but half its Course, but when it ascends from Earth to Heaven, the Circle is completed.

2. *This Love which is the Product of God's, is virtually all Obedience;* both as it inclines and disposes unto all, and as it comprehends all in it.

1. *It disposes and inclines to all Obedience.* When the Heart is melted by this Fire within, 'tis easily cast into the mould of any Precept whatsoever. As it puts us upon keeping the Commandments of God, so it keeps them from being grievous, *1 John 5. 3.* Obedience can neither be partial nor burdensome, where-ever this Love of God dwells; but it fulfils the Charge which *David* gave to *Solomon*, *of serving God with a perfect Heart, and a willing Mind,* *1 Chron. 28. 9.*

2. *It comprehends all Obedience in it self.* The end of the Commandment, is *Charity*, &c. *1 Tim. 1. 5.* Both Tables are reduc'd by Christ to two Commandments, and Love is the grand Inscription of them both. *Therefore Love is styled the fulfilling of the Law,* *Rom. 13. 10.* All the Duty which we owe to God and to our Neighbour is included in Love to each. And indeed we cannot walk in God's Truth, unless we walk in Love to one another, as well as to him. Our Alienations from our Brethren speak our distance from Christ the Center of our Union. The nearer any Lines in a Circle come to the Cen-

Center, the nearer they are one to another; but the further they go from the Center, the more they run out one from another.

III. *To Apply this*, What are we to be inform'd of, and exhorted to?

I. *Use, Information.*

1. *If our Obedience be excited by the Love of God, then the Love of God prevents our Obedience.* If we did first give to God, he is able infinitely to recompence it again, above what we can think; but who is it that hath first given unto him? Rom. 11. 35. There is not one whose Heart God hath touch'd, that will dare to pretend it. We do not commend our selves to God, but God manifests himself to us. The Love of God was not purchas'd even by the Obedience of Christ, much less by ours, 1 John 4. 10. *Herein is Love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins.* The sending of the Son was the Effect of the Father's Love; and therefore the Son's coming could not be the Cause of it. How then can we procure what Christ did not? His Love is not bestow'd upon us for our Service, but is the incentive to it.

2. *'Tis blasphemy against the Love of God to reproach it with being the Parent or Nurse of carnal Security.* They that have the Kindness of God in their Eye, can take no Encouragement from thence to set any wicked Thing before them; for Sin tends to Cloud that Light, wherein we rejoyce. If God be well pleased with us, it lays the greater Engagement upon us to walk worthy of him. How absurd is it to say, that
when

when God communicates his Thoughts of Peace, the Soul is embolden'd to new Acts of Treason? As if Men should lay aside the *Fear of God*, because the *Secret of the Lord is with them that fear him*? Psalm 25. 14. Or as if the Spirit of Adoption took Men off from *Obedience to God*, when they are call'd to be *Followers of him as dear Children*, Eph. 5. 1.

3. *They that by loose and disorderly Practices give any occasion to such Blasphemers, have a great deal of Sin to answer for, besides their own.* If any of us Cause this way of Truth, to be evil spoken of, we bring the guilt of those Calumnies upon our selves. It will be an heavy load to a tender Conscience, if sound Doctrine is arraign'd through our unmortified Corruption. How do we wrong the Purity of the Gospel, when we turn the Grace of our God into lasciviousness! *For the Grace of God which bringeth Salvation, teacheth us the contrary*, Tit. 2. 11, 12. What is this, but to change the Glory of God into an Image made like to unclean Spirits! Wo to those *Libertines*, by whom this offence cometh! What Jealousie and Rage does that Adulterers deserve, who impudently abuses her Husband's Love?

4. *The Grace of God in us is a comforting Evidence of his Love to us.* Though Holy Walking is no Foundation for Trust, we may reflect upon it as a Token for good. 'Tis said of the way of Holiness, that the redeemed shall walk there, Isa. 35. 8, 9. as *Mary Magdalen's* Pardon is concluded from her Affection, so if God enables us to make straight Paths for our Feet, 'tis a sign that he hath set his Heart upon us. As all Obedience issues from the Spirit, so the Gift of

of that Spirit is a Testimony of peculiar Favour, Ezek. 39. 29. *Neither will I hide my Face any more from them, for I have poured out my Spirit, &c.*

5. *A denial of the possibility of Assurance is injurious to Holiness.* The first and best Christians were such as could say, *we have known and believed the Love which God hath to us,* 1 John 4. 16. *And they that have had the same Spirit of Faith, have always approved themselves the greatest Saints in all succeeding Times;* but to say, that this their belief was a Delusion, is in effect to say that all their Religion was a Cheat too, which in this more degenerate Age is hardly to be matcht. To stake Men down to uncertain suspended waverings about their Interest in the Love of God, is to destroy the most quickening Motive to Obedience.

6. *The Christian Life is as far from being uncomfortable, as from being irregular.* What greater Pleasure can there be, than to be constantly influenc'd by the Love of God to the Service of God? A dull and lowre Complexion does not belong to real Christianity, Psalm 97. 11. *Light is sown for the Righteous, and Gladness for the upright in Heart.* Though Cain's Countenance fall, Abel's Race may lift up their Heads. If there be any Consolation in Christ, they that are his, have reason to rejoyce; and what more sure, than that there is all in him, and none out of him? *He hath a Chariot of Gold paved with Love, for the Daughters of Jerusalem,* Song 3. 10. What so delightful, as to go up and sit with him in that Chariot?

II. *Exhortation.*

1. *Think not only on the Love of God in general, but on the most affecting Properties of it in Particular.* Such as

1. *Its Antiquity.* God loved us from Eternity, before we were, and before the World was; and there have been Early discoveries of it; there is the *Love of God to us* in our Childhood, *Hof. 11. 1.* And his *Kindness in our Youth*, *Jer. 2. 2.* Which are both Seasons of Vanity. *The Loving Kindnesses of God* are not of Yesterday, but of very ancient Date; *They have been ever of Old*, *Psaln 25. 6.*

2. *Its Freeness*, according to the Tenor of his *Promise*, *Hof. 14. 4.* His Love is the Reason of it self; *He loves, because he loves*, *Deut. 7. 7, 8.* And it must needs be so, if we consider what unamiable Creatures we are. God bids us to love our Enemies, and he himself is the great Example of it. He loves our Persons, when he hates our Enmity.

3. *Its enlargedness.* He shews *Loving Kindness to Thousands*, *Jer. 32. 18.* And he Crowns every one of those Thousands with it, *Psa'm 103. 4.* He hath many Objects to let it out unto, and every one of these Objects stands in need of multiplied Acts; yet the Fountain of Mercy overflows to all, and remains still full.

4. *Its Stability.* 'Tis unmovable and Everlasting, *Isa. 54. 8.* No Creature can separate us from it. The Anger of God is transient, *Isa. 12. 1.* But his Love is permanent. The Time will come, when God will be Angry no more; but the Time will never come, when he will be favourable no more. Let your Faith feed upon these Thing.

2. *Be-*

2. Beware of renouncing your share in that Grace which God hath encourag'd you to claim. Refusal of Divine Comforts is a Sin, as well as Disobedience to Holy Motions. 'Tis almost a fundamental Mistake (says Dr. Sibbes) to think that God delights in slavish Fears. 'Tis a very unpleasing Thing to him, to have his Kindness call'd into Question, *Mal. 1. 2. I have loved you saith the Lord, yet you say, wherein hast thou loved us?* Therefore give not Place to the Devil, nor the unbelieving Suggestions of your own Hearts.

3. Attend to the Love-visits of Christ, and thankfully receive them. The Spouse smarted by grievous Desertion, for delaying to open to Christ when he knockt at her Door, *Song 5. 1. — 6. When our Beloved comes into his Garden, we must not neglect the holding of converse with him.* We may lose him a great while, if we put by such an Opportunity once.

4. Avoid all Confidence in the Flesh, as a fatal hinderance to spiritual Joy. No wonder, if we hear God say, *I have no delight in you*, when we have fond Conceits of our own Performances. That House which stands upon the weak Foundation of a personal Righteousness must needs be shaken with perpetual Doubts, and the fall of it at last will be great. We might Fear every Day, the Heart of God being turned to hate his People, if their Hopes of abiding in Favour with him were built upon the best of their Duties.

5. Take heed of spotting your Garments with the Flesh, after God hath been spreading his Skirt over you. Sinning against Love and Light at once, is a double Aggravation. It was a foul blot upon Solomon, *That his Heart was turned from the*

Lord God of Israel, who had appeared unto him twice, 1 Kings 11. 9. 'Tis reasonable to expect that you should not defile your selves any more with your detestable Things, Ezek. 37. 23. If any part of your Walk be contrary to God, 'tis worse, than if the whole Walk of other Men be so.

6. *As you desire an increase of Comfort, make daily progress in a course of Obedience.* If you covet a greater fulness of Joy, labour after a higher Exercise of Grace. God required more exactness in the Services of the Jews, when they were come to their rest in Canaan, than when they were harrass'd in the Wilderness, Deut. 12. 8, 9. So you who look for extraordinary Love tokens from God, must remember, that he calls for great Improvements from you. *An abundant entrance into the Kingdom of Christ is ministred to Believers in a way of unwearied Diligence,* 2 Pet. 1. 11, with 5. The more ground we get, and the further we advance, the greater likelihood there is of meeting with more of God.

SERMON V.

October 8. 1695.

II CORINTH. I. xx.

*For all the Promises of God in him are yea,
and in him Amen, unto the Glory of God
by us.*

IT is observable, that as none among the Apostles was more useful and serviceable than *Paul* to the Interest of Christ, and the Souls of Men, so the Devil did especially labour to stain his Credit, and to blast his Ministry; and and even little Things, that had nothing of Evil in them, such as common Charity would have excus'd in any other Person, were maliciously improv'd and perverted against him. We need to go no further than this very Chapter for an instance; there being an Imputation of Levity and falshood cast upon him, because he had resolved to come to this Church at *Corinth*, but did not. This was aggravated so far, as if he were one that said, and unsaid, one that took no Care about the keeping of his Word, and that therefore no regard was to be had to any Thing that he delivered. In Opposition to this foul and groundless Charge, the Apostle makes

an Apology and Defence for himself, *ver. 17.* Where he lets them know, that he was no such fickle and unconstant Man, as he was represented; for his Intention of coming to them was real, though he was providentially obstructed in performing it. And on this occasion he also tells them, that his whole Doctrine had been uniform, and consistent with it self at all Times, without any Variations, or Contradictions, *ver. 18.* The course of his Preaching among them, being like the great subject of it, *Jesus Christ, the Son of God*, who is not Yea at one Time, and Nay at another, but fixedly and unchangeably the same for ever, *ver. 19.* Now, as a convincing Proof of this, he adds in the Words of the Text, *For all the Promises of God in him, are Yea, &c.*

In which Words we may consider,

1. *The Things spoken of Promises, επαγγελίας, which is very much a kin to ευαγγέλιον: The Gospel strictly taken, being indeed a Treasury of blessed Promises, and Declarations of Grace.*

2. *The large Extent in which these Things are spoken of. [All] none excepted, but as many soever as there are, and of whatsoever kind they be, as Solomon said, 1 Kings 8. 56. There hath not failed one good Word, &c.*

3. *The Author of them. [God.] This ought to be eyed by us, because the Infinite Power and immutable faithfulness of God are grand Encouragements to our steady Expectation, Rom. 4. 21. Heb. 10. 23.*

4. *The Stability of them. They are [Yea and Amen] here are two different Terms us'd to signify the same Thing; the former of these is a Greek Word, and the latter Hebrew, as Gal.*

4. 6. *Abba Father* ; the one is *Hebrew*, and the other *Greek* ; intimating that both *Jew* and *Gentile* are concerned in these Things.

5. *The Foundation of this Stability*, [*in him*] i. e. *in Christ*, and to give it the greater Emphasis and Force, the Expression is doubled, which Repetitions are not unusual in the Writings of this Apostle on the like occasions, *Eph.* 1. 10. *All Things in Christ, even in him.* *Col.* 1. 20. *By him to reconcile all Things, by him, I say, &c.*

6. *The End and Scope of all*, [*unto the Glory of God*] that which is God's design in his gracious actual Vouchsafements, is the tendency of every Promise also, the magnifying and exalting of himself is ultimately aim'd at ; and hereunto the Holiness and Comfort of his Creature is but subordinate.

7. *The Instruments or Means of bringing about this End*, [*by us*] which may have a respect both to the Ministers of Christ, whose Work it is to hold forth the *Promises of God*, and to all Believers, whose Duty 'tis to embrace and apply them ; each of these contribute in their Place, and in their measure, to the advancing of the *Glory of God*.

Obs. *All Divine Promises are fully ratified in Jesus Christ to the Glory of their Author.*

This is the Sum and Substance of the Text, which an Interpreter, one of a Thousand, Calvin (though too meanly thought of, and vilely reflected on in this degenerate Age,) calls *Sententia memorabilis*, & *unum ex præcipuis Fidei nostræ capitibus* ; a memorable Sentence, and one of the chief Articles of our Faith. Here I. O.

I. Open something of the Nature of Divine Promises.

II. Enquire into some of the Principal Kinds of them.

III. Shew, why they are said to be ratified in Christ.

IV. How they tend to the Glory of God.

V. Use.

I. *To open something of the Nature of Divine Promises.* In five Propositions.

1. *The Promises of God are of a middle Nature, distinct from his Purpose and Performance.* They come between the Decree, which is from Everlasting, and the Execution of it, which is in Time. They are Significations of his Will, as a thing past, and fore-runners of the Event, as a Thing to come. When God promiseth any Thing, it is before he does it, and after he hath determined it; we must suppose a prævious Resolution, and we may expect a following Accomplishment. A Promise is the unfolding of the Heart of God, the communicating and manifesting of those kind Thoughts which he thinks towards us, when he hath not yet fulfill'd them. It is impossible that God should Promise any Thing, but what he hath ordain'd to be, and when it hath a real being, there is no need of any further Promise. God is willing first to reveal his Love to us in Word, and then in Act; that while the Blessing he intends to bestow, is but in the Way to us, and at a distance from us, we may Live in the comfortable Prospect of it. A Promise is a Transcript of God's Counsel, and a Pledge of the Thing it self. What he hath

hath purposed, he speaks; and what he hath spoken, he cannot go back from.

2. *The Promises of God argue much Condescension to us, but no Imperfection in him.* God humbles himself, as it were, in making them, but he does not truly lessen himself thereby. He stoops to the Infirmary of his Creatures, and yet the Honour of his own Majesty is preserv'd. In every Promise, 'tis true, that God makes himself a Debtor, but still he remains our Infinite Superiour; for though the Promises be made to us, and for our Benefit, yet God does not owe any Thing to us, or for our sake; the Debt is properly to himself, on the account of his own Fidelity, not to us on the account of Justice; therefore 'tis said, *That he abideth faithful, he cannot deny himself*, 2 Tim. 2. 13. 'Tis no debasement of God to stand bound to his own Word, but 'tis below him to be under any Obligation to his Creature. We cannot demand or claim the fulfilling of any Promise, as if the denial of it would be an injury and wrong to us, but because it would derogate from his Glory, and be unworthy of himself. This is what we have to fasten upon, and this hold is sure enough.

3. *The meer goodness of God is that which puts him upon promising.* There was no Necessity of God's engaging himself to do any thing for us, though we were tyed to do our utmost for him; but his Engagements are Free and Voluntary, and spring from his own gracious Inclinations and Propensions to us. God was at absolute Liberty, whether he would enter into any such Bond or not; such a Liberty was essential to him as God; whereas a Creature must needs be under the

Yoke, as soon as it hath any being. Every thing is due from us to God, whether we willingly oblige our selves to yield it to him or not; but there is nothing due from God to us; nor can we challenge the least Thing more than he freely binds himself to. What God hath not promised, we cannot look for; and even that which he hath promised, must have been despair'd of also, if it had not been his good Pleasure to make those Promises; for he promiseth because he will.

4. *The goodness of God in Conjunction with his faithfulness, is his influencing Motive to perform the Promises which he hath made, Psalm 57. 3. God shall send forth his Mercy and his Truth. Mic. 7. 20. Thou wilt perform the Truth to Jacob, and the Mercy to Abraham.* This lovely Pair of Attributes are a joynt Security to our Faith, that whatsoever God hath declared in his Word, shall be indeed accomplisht to us. The same Mercy which first moved God to express such kindness to us, is our warrant to believe that those Expressions shall be made good to us, whatever seeming difficulties and impediments lye in the Way. Everlasting Mercy is our mighty support in this Case, which we are to set against the Discouragement of our daily Sins. These are the most likely Evils to hinder and withhold our good Things from us; but these Obstacles are remov'd by Grace, *Psalm 65. 3. Iniquities prevail against me; (but there is a Remedy for this), as for our Transgressions, &c. Psalm 65. 3.*

5. *The Promises of God are given forth for Believers to live upon.* While they are in this World, they are the Pilgrim's Staff, whereon he is to lean

lean and rest, as long as he passeth the Time of his sojourning here. They are the Wells of Salvation, from which we are to draw Water in a dry and thirsty Land. The Life which we live in the Flesh, is not a Life of Enjoyment, but a Life of Faith, and this is the Food which God hath provided for the maintaining of that Life. The Apostle says, *We are saved by Hope, but Hope which is seen is not Hope, for what a Man seeth, why doth he yet Hope for?* Rom. 8. 24. Heaven is the Place and State of sight, here we are but *Expectants*; there they are in *Possession*, but the present World is design'd for the Exercise of Trust. God is to be our Confidence on this side the Grave, and our Portion afterwards. *Faith is the Substance of Things hoped for*, Heb. 11. 1. We are to look upon that as present, which is in it self Future.

II. To enquire into some of the principal Kinds of Divine Promises. The Text speaks of *All*, implying that they are manifold, and of divers sorts: I shall take Notice only of what may be distributed under these six following Heads.

1. *There are Promises which concern the Preservation of the World in general, as well as others which respect the welfare of those who are chosen out of the World*, Isa. 54. 9. This is as the Waters of Noah unto me; for as I have sworn, that the Waters of Noah should no more go over the Earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, &c. The Promise which God here refers to, is as ancient as the Flood; I will not again smite any more every living Thing, as I have done, Gen. 8. 21. So, I will set my Bow in the Cloud; and it shall be for a token of a Covenant between me and the

the Earth, Chap. 9. 13. This Promise of God is as a Fence or Bank to the World against a second Deluge; but this hath its Ratification in Christ, for it was made upon God's smelling a sweet Savour from *Noah's* Sacrifice, which was Typical of Christ; and the Rain-bow it self seems to be a Figure of him also, *Rev.* 4. 3.

2. *There are Promises which relate to the Church of Christ, as an Holy Society, as well as others that concern particular Believers*, *Mat.* 16. 18. *Upon this Rock I will build my Church, and the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.* Whether the Powers of Darknes acted by the Devil, or the Gates of Death and the Grave be here meant, it amounts to the same Sense, the intendment of our Lord being plainly this, that he will have a Church in the World to the End of the World; it shall never totally perish from the Earth, but be confirmed in spite of its greatest Adversaries, and survive them all. This Promise, as it was utter'd by the Mouth of Christ, so it hath its Stability from him; for it becomes the Head to protect the Body, and to take Care that it be not destroy'd. He sitting on the Throne is a safeguard to his People, dwelling on the Footstool.

3. *There are Promises which belong to the Posterities of them that believe, as well as others to their Persons; for God receives, and takes in not only them, but theirs*, *Acts* 2. 39. *The Promise is to you and to your Children.* This is not to be taken so universally, as if all the Children of Believers were the Children of Promise; we see the contrary often; many spiritual Men are afflicted with a carnal Seed; Grace is not tyed to a lineal descent in Religious Families, but only flows down where the Vein of Election runs. However

ever the Promises are indefinitely laid down, and may accordingly be urg'd to God by his faithful ones, for those that belong to them, *Psalms 112. 2. The Generation of the Upright shall be Blessed.* This hath its Establishment in Christ, for as he was sent to Bless, so little Children particularly were blest by him.

4. *There are Promises which have a Reference to Temporal Things, as well as others that refer to Spirituals and Eternals.* This is such a Distribution as the Apostle makes of them, *1 Tim. 4. 8. Having the Promise of the Life which now is, and of that which is to come.* Some Promises do more immediately concern the Body, others bear a Relation to the Soul; some respect Time, and others Eternity. Both sorts have their Confirmation in Christ; only Temporal Promises are fulfilled with more Limitations and Restrictions, than the Spiritual are; because Temporal good Things may not be always good for us, but when they are so, they shall be given. Yea, and in spiritual Cases also, we must distinguish between what is indispensibly necessary to Salvation, and what is not: For we may want some Degrees of Grace, and of Assurance, and yet the Promise may stand fast.

5. *There are Old Testament Promises, and New Testament Promises; which do not differ in regard of Matter (for they exhibit the same substantial Mercies) but only in regard of elder or newer Date.* There were Promises which nourish'd the Faith of Believers before Christ's Time; *Promises made unto the Fathers*, which Christ was sent to confirm, *Rom. 15. 8.* Promises which kept the Church alive, till Christ appear'd; we have all these, with the Addition of many more; we have Line
upon

upon Line, Promise upon Promise, since the coming of Christ into the World; for the Riches of Mercy are now more plentifully made known, and the Discoveries of Grace abound under the Gospel Dispensation; but all this fresh Edition of Promises, as well as the other, are founded upon Christ.

6. *There are Promises which have been perform'd already, some perfectly, others in Part; and there are Promises which yet remain to be performed.* The promised Deliverance of *Israel* out of *Egypt*, and *Babylon* hath been accomplisht; the Calling of the *Gentiles* also accomplisht in some measure, and the Detection and begun Consummation of Antichrist; but there are still to come many glorious Things, which are spoken of the City of God: The National Conversion of the *Jews*, a more eminent setting up of the Kingdom of Christ in the Kingdoms of the World, the repairing and beautifying of *Sion* beyond the Patterns of former Ages, the total and final overthrow of all her Enemies. As to every one of these, though yet only promised, we may apply that Voice from Heaven, *Rev.* 16. 17. And say *it is done.* That which is Future is secur'd upon the same bottom, as that which is past, was. Every Word of Promise from God, whether fulfill'd or unfulfill'd, hath but one Center of Infallibility, *viz.* Jesus Christ.

III. *Why are Divine Promises said to be ratified in Christ.* Upon what accounts does the Apostle here pronounce them *Yea and Amen in him?*
Ans. For these seven Reasons.

1. *Jesus Christ acts the Part, and Office of a Witness on the behalf of God, who is the Person promising.*

mising. God never left himself without a Witness, for he hath authorized and employed many, in the several Ages of the World, to bear their Testimony to him, and his Blessed Truths; but he hath eminently and emphatically given Christ to be a Witness, *Isa.* 55. 4. Who does incomparably and infinitely excel all others; for he is stiled the *Amen, The faithful and true Witness*, *Rev.* 3. 14. Yea, he is the Truth it self; *John* 14. 6. He testifies what he hath seen and heard with the Father; an Eye-witness, and an Ear-witness, *Chap.* 3. 32. An Honour which no Man could assume, but the Man Christ Jesus who was in the beginning, and before the beginning with God, who was by him from Everlasting, and know all that was in his Heart, when there was nothing utter'd by Word, or committed to Writing. He hath manifested the Fathers Counsels of Peace, and Commissioned his Servants to Report them. *Rev.* 22. 6. *He said unto me, these sayings are, &c.*

2. *Jesus Christ is the Surety of that Covenant, wherein all the Promises are comprehended.* So he is expressly call'd, *Surety of a better Testament*, *Heb.* 7. 22. *Or better Covenant, which is established upon better Promises*, *Chap.* 8. 6. He undertakes and engages for God, that all which he hath Promised shall be made good to us; he was that Angel of the Lord, that appear'd to *Moses* in the burning Bush, and said to him, *I am the God of thy Father, the God of Abraham, &c.* *Exod.* 3. 6. He speaks in his Fathers Name, and as a Person concern'd to see the Contract perform'd. Now as this general Promise of God's being our God, is the summ of the New Covenant, so all particular Promises are included in this; for if
God

God be our God, nothing can be withheld by him, nothing can be wanting to us. And this new Covenant being Written (as it were) and Sealed with his Blood, we are not more sure, that that Blood was really shed, then we are sure that this Covenant will be punctually kept.

3. *Jesus Christ is the Person to whom the Promises are primarily made.* As he is said to be the *Heir of all Things*, Heb. 1. 2. So he is the first and chiefest Heir of Promise. *The Promises were made to Abraham's Seed, which is Christ*, Gal. 3. 16. Many understand that Text of Christ Mystical, but I see not why Christ Personal should be shut out. However other Scriptures evince the same Thing, *Tit. 1. 2. In Hope of Eternal Life, which God that cannot Lye, hath Promised before the World began.* We did not then exist our selves, therefore it must be promised to Christ on our behalf, as the second *Adam*, the Head of the Election of Grace; for from him 'tis convey'd to us, and belongs to us, no otherwise than as we are one with him. Hence we read of *the sure Mercies of David*, Isa. 55. 3. *i. e.* Of Christ, as the Apostle applies it, *Acts 13. 34.* See likewise, *Psalms 89. 3, 4.* where *David* is to be understood in the same Sense. On this account he is said to receive of the Father the Promise of the Holy Ghost for us, *Acts 2. 33.* If God break Promise with us, he must be false to his Son.

4. *Jesus Christ is the first and main Thing promised.* The most Ancient and Leading Promise had a direct Reference to him; *The Seed of the Woman shall bruise the Serpents Head*, Gen. 3. 15. And when the Apostle had drawn up a List of those famous Worthies that Lived and Dyed, before

before Christ's Time, he says of them, *These all having obtained a good Report through Faith, receiv'd not, the Promise,* Heb. 11. 39. There were several Promises which they did receive, and were possess'd of, but the Appearance of Christ in his incarnate State, which was the grand Promise; they liv'd not to see, but dyed in the belief of. Therefore when he came into the World, good Old *Simeon*, was so chearfully willing to leave it; *Lord now lettest thou thy Servant depart in Peace,* &c. *Luke 2. 29. q. d.* now I have seen the verifying of thy Word in this great Point, I have enough.

5. *The Promise of Christ was a Pledge of the Performance of all other Promises.* In the Time of *Abaz*, one of the worst of King's, *Syria* and *Israel* were Confederate against *Judah*, and God bids them not to fear nor be faint hearted, but rest satisfied that they should be deliver'd, and for their Encouragement, so as to put their promised Deliverance out all Doubt, he gives them a Sign; *viz. Behold, a Virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call his Name Emmanuel,* Isa. 7. 14. If your Faith can overcome this difficulty, you cannot be tempted to call any thing else into Question. God's Manifestation in Flesh, and becoming Man, is the greatest Thing, that can be lookt for: If this be done, nothing can be left undone. 'Tis impossible that any Promise should be defeated, if this be accomplisht, as *Rom. 8. 32. How shall he not with him, &c?*

6. *The Execution of all Promises depends upon Christ's Purchase.* Whatever is promised by God, is performed to us for Christ's sake, as the meritorious Cause of its actual Conation, *Eph. 3. 6. That the Gentiles should be Fellow-heirs, and partakers*

takers of his Promise in Christ, by the Gospel. The Gospel is the means of our Participation of Divine Promises, but Christ himself is the Procurer of all the good Things held forth in them. We enjoy nothing, but what his valuable Sufferings give us a Right and Title to. 'Tis by his Death, that they who are called, receive the Promise of Eternal Inheritance, Heb. 9. 15. Therefore the Covenant is stiled a Testament, which is of no Strength, nor can any of the Things bequeathed in it be demanded, except the Testator Dye, ver. 16, 17. Though God be a free Promiser with respect to us, yet all that is promised is deserved for us by Christ.

7. All Promises issuing and proceeding from Love and Grace, must needs be ratified in Christ, and cannot without him. Promises are Expressions of Favour as threatnings are Revelations of Wrath. Now all the Favour which God shews to us, comes Streaming through Christ, 'tis the Love where with God hath loved him, which is in us; or exercis'd toward us, John 17. 26. He is the first Object of Divine Love; the first begotten, and the first Beloved. The beloved, Eph. 1. 6. If God should look upon us out of him, we must be the Objects of his Hatred, and he could not speak peaceably unto us. As Joseph solemnly protested to his Brethren, concerning Benjamin, Gen. 43. 3. You shall not see my Face, except your Brother be with you; so we could not have one Smile, or good Word, or Intimation of any kindness from God, unless we had Christ to recommend us.

SERMON VI.

October 22. 1695.

II CORINTH. I. xx.

*For all the Promises of God in him are Yea,
and in him Amen, unto the Glory of God
by us.*

IV. **H**OW do these Promises so confirmed in
Christ tend to the glorifying of God?

This may be Opened two ways; By considering the tendency of them on his part, and on ours.

1. *They tend to the glorifying of God on his part; who is the Author of them; and this in four respects especially:*

1. *As they tend to the glorifying of Christ the Mediator, who is so much concern'd and employ'd in the making of them sure to us. He is had in Honour the more by this means; this renders him a precious Corner-Stone, as he is called, Isa. 28.16. It heightens our Esteem of him, as well as gives us encouragement to build upon him. Now whatever is to the Glory of Christ, must needs conduce to the Glory of God; for God is in Christ, as he told the Israelites concerning*
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the Angel whom he promised to send before them, *My Name is in him*, Exodus 23. 21. Therefore the Exaltation of Christ is to the Glory of God the Father, Phil. 2. 11. And our Lord tells his Disciples, when Judas was gone out with a purpose to betray him into the hands of his Murderers, John 13. 31. *Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him.* The Glory of the Father, and the Glory of the Son are indeed inseparable; that which lifts up *the express Image of his Person* in the World, will necessarily redound to himself; as on the contrary, the Contempt which is cast upon Christ, reflects upon God.

2. *They tend to the Glory of God's Grace in setting forth the Sovereignty and Amplitude of it.*

1. *They shew the Sovereignty of the Grace of God; that he should make such Promises to Creatures, to whom only Curses and Threatnings belong.* What marvellous Goodness is it, to over-rule all the Pleas of Justice and Judgment so far, that the *promise of life in Christ Jesus* (2 Tim. 1. 1.) should be given to Men that do nothing but what is worthy of Death! That God should send such *good Tidings of great Joy* to those that could have look'd for nothing but flaming Vengeance, and implacable Fury! How plainly does this prove what he says, *That he will be gracious to whom he will be gracious?* Exod. 33. 12.

2. *They shew the Amplitude of God's Grace; for if Grace did not abound, and flow out plentifully from the Heart of God to us, we could never have had so large a stock of Promises as the Scripture supplies us with.* There are Promises sufficient for every want, and suited to every condition; Promises of relief in every Distress,

Distress; of help against every Infirmity; Promises of Support in our Temptations, and of escape out of them, 1 Cor. 10. 13. Certainly, If God had not been *rich in Mercy*, we should have been more sparingly provided.

3. *They tend to the Glory of his Truth.* This evidently appears by his bringing to pass what he hath promised. The Word of God being verified in his Works, so constantly and punctually as it is, is a convincing Instance and Argument of his Fidelity. If God did never promise the doing of us good, the lustre of this Attribute would very much be lost, though the un-promised Good should be done. If God should give us *Grace and Glory*, without telling us before-hand, that he will, how should we know him to be the *true and faithful God* by the giving of it? The *Promise* is as the *Orb*, in which this Perfection of God shines forth. The *Promise* and *Oath* of God are those *immutable things (by his)* in which it is impossible for God to lie, Hebr. 6. 18. The *Exact Accomplishments* of these things are so many clear Demonstrations of that *impossibility*, Psal. 89. 34. *My Covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing which is gone out of my lips.* If he could have changed or violated his Word, he is provok'd enough to do it.

4. *They tend to the Glory of his Power.* God is styl'd able to do above all that we can think, Eph. 3. 20. and indeed many of the things which God hath promised, are such as could not have entered into our hearts to conceive. Much of that which God hath made the matter of our Expectation, does exceed our Imagination; and yet we can think a great deal more than we can do, or more than any other Creature can. This

therefore magnifies the Power of God, and shews the length and strength of his Arm beyond the utmost capacities of Angels and Men. The Devil indeed frequently promises, not only more than he intends to perform, but more than he is able to perform if he would. He told our Lord, when he shewed him all the Kingdoms of the World, *All these things will I give thee*; whereas he could not really give him the smallest single Thing out of these all; instead of giving him the whole of what he saw, he could not give him one Foot of the ground on which he stood. But on the other hand, God cannot Promise more than he can Perform, though he performs sometimes more than he hath positively promised.

2. *They conduce to the Glory of God on our Part, who believe them; for we glorifie God by Believing more than by Working, more by receiving the Promise than by fulfilling the Command.* Though Faith and Obedience are by no Means to be set in Opposition (for Obedience springs from Faith) yet when they come into Comparison, Faith is to have the Preference; God hath set the Royal Crown upon the Head of Faith and made her Queen instead of Works. No Sin so great a reproach and dishonour to God as unbelief; no Grace or Duty that brings in such a Tribute of Glory to him, as our believing in his Word. *Rom. 4. 20. He (Abraham) stagger'd not at the Promise of God through unbelief but was strong in Faith, giving Glory to God.* The stronger the Faith, and the less mixtures it hath of Infidelity, the more Glory results to God: This is manifest in two Things. The Promises which are confirm'd in Christ, are to the
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Glory of God, when receiv'd by us: Because

1. *Faith is a Subscription of the Soul to them.* The doing of the Words of the Law is call'd a Confirming of them, *Deut.* 27. 26. Because indeed, every Transgressor of the Law does as much as in him lies, to disanul and make it void. So Faith in the Promise is as it were our Confirmation of it; and full Agreement to it. As on the other side, to disbelieve the Promise, is to Abrogate and Cancel it, as far as we can. Here lies the Blasphemy of Infidelity; *He that believeth not God, hath made him a Liar*, one not fit to be Credited, *1 John* 5. 10. But he that receives his Testimony, sets to his Seal, that God is true, *John* 3. 33. There is a double Seal to the Foundation of Divine Promises. The Seal of God's unchangeableness, which he puts to it, and the Seal of a Believers firm Persuasion and Consent, which is to be affixt by us. So God declares his Promises to be *Amen*, and we also by Faith put our *Amen* to them; here is *Amen* and *Amen*, ours as an Eccho to God's; for our *Amen* signifies not only desire of accomplishment, but Assurance; not only so be it, but so it shall be. Of this we have an Example, *Jer.* 11. 5.

2. *Faith includes a Dependance of the Soul upon them.* Hence David says, *My Flesh shall rest in Hope*, *Psalms* 16. 9. That Hope which is grounded on the Word, gives rest to the Soul; 'tis as an Anchor to keep it steady, *Heb.* 6. 13. Which shews the unmoveableness of that which our Anchor is fasten'd to. The Promise sustains our Faith, and our Faith is that which supports us. He that Hopes in the Word, as David did, *Psalms* 119. 81. laies a mighty stress

upon it; as *Sampson* did, when he leaned upon the Pillars of the House, so as to pull it down upon the *Philistines*. A Believer throws the whole weight of all his Affairs and Concernments, Temporal, Spiritual, and Eternal upon the Promises of God, like a Man resolved to stand or fall with them. He ventures himself and all that belongs to him, entirely upon this bottom, which is in Effect to say, if they will not bear me up, I am Content to sink; I know that there shall be a Performance of those Things which have been told me from the Lord, and therefore I will incessantly look for it.

V. Use. *This Doctrine may be improv'd by way of Information and Exhortation.*

1. *Information.*

1, *All that's enjoyed out of Christ, is only in a Course of common Providence, not by Vertue of any Promise; because all the Promises are Yea and Amen in Christ. They that are without Christ, are strangers from the Covenant of Promise, Eph. 2. 12. In a Christless State, they have no more to do with them, nor can receive any more Benefit by them, than the Devils themselves, who are not only reserv'd to Judgment, but are partly under Execution. Carnal Men have very often a large Portion of this World; God brings into their Hands abundantly, Job 12. 6. He fills their Houses with good Things, Chap. 22. 18. But as the Holy Ghost says of the Hearts of such Men, so it may be said of the best of their Enjoyments, they are little worth. They are but miserable Comforts, because they are not given on the account of Promise; therefore given in Wrath,*
and

and not in Mercy; with a Curse, and not with a Blessing.

2. *Legal Promises are out of Date, and quite Excluded.* There are no Promises in force, but what are in Christ. And therefore no Promises but what are Evangelical; for though Christ came to fulfil the Precepts of the Law, he came to establish the Promises of the Gospel; *Do and Live* is the Promise of the Old Covenant, but this is destroy'd and taken away in Christ; and he that attempts to live by doing, builds up what Christ destroy'd. The Law was indeed Publish'd in its full Perfection to the *Jews*, but it was with a gracious Design of subserviency to the Gospel, by leading them to Christ; that being sensible of their own inability to keep the Law, they might fly to him, and take Sanctuary in his unspotted Righteousness and compleat Obedience. The Law is abus'd, when set up to the vacating or weakening of the Covenant of Grace. *Paul* rejects this with abhorrence, *Gal. 3. 21. Is the Law then against the Promises of God? God forbid.*

3. *The Promises of God are not founded upon the Performances of the Creature; for then they would not be to his Glory by us, so much as to our Glory by him.* The Ancient Believers obtained Promises through Faith, *Heb. 11. 33.* And so must we. And indeed this is the customary Scripture-way of expressing this Matter, *Gal. 3. 14. That we might receive the Promise of the Spirit through Faith, ver. 22. That the Promise by Faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.* Now whatsoever is by Faith must needs be purely of Grace; without the least respect to any worthiness in the Object. God does not

suppose Qualifications in us, but work them; and those very Promises which are conditionally propounded, as to the Manner of delivering them, are absolutely perform'd to those that are interested in them; for the same God gives both Repentance and Pardon, Grace and Glory.

4. *The Happy State of a Believer is unalterably sure.* Psalm 125. 1. *They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever.* The Reason is plain, because the Covenant and Promise of God, which is all their Salvation, and all their Support, can never be removed, *Isa.* 54. 10. Notwithstanding all our own Threatening Infirmities, here is Matter of strong Confidence. Grace in us is weak, Corruption oftentimes gets the upper hand, our Hearts are deceitful, the Tempter is very busie; but none of these Things shake the Perseverance of the Saints; though they should awaken our Caution, and persuade our Diligence, they should not move us from our Hope; because that Word of God is settled in Heaven, which concerns our Settlement and Security here on Earth. He who requires us to stand fast, hath promised that we shall do so; and his Promises are not suspended upon uncertain Conditions, which may fail, but they have their full Ratification in Christ, who is always the same: *A Sun of Righteousness without any Shadow of turning.*

5. *Though a Believer may be stript naked and bare of all his outward Things, he cannot be robb'd of his truest Riches; he still really abounds when he suffers the greatest need: For his most substantial Wealth (as well as Life) is hid with Christ*

Christ in God, the Promises of God being all confirm'd to him in Christ. Upon this account, though he be utterly emptied of every Thing in this World, that properly belongs to the World, he may justly say, nevertheless, I have all, and am full. The Testimonies of God are a goodly Heritage, and the rejoycing of the Heart in the Total Deprivation of External Comforts: This will explain that Paradox of the Apostle, 2 Cor. 8. 10. *As having nothing, and yet possessing all Things*; though we have nothing in Hand, yet we have all Things in hope; what we want in Possession, is infinitely made up by Promise. To have our Portion of Goods in our own Hands (as the Prodigal had) is dangerous, we may spend it or lose it; but to have a Stock in God's Hands is safe, 'tis a Treasure which faileth not. *The Poor of this World have a blessed Recompence, if Rich in Faith*; James 2. 5. In this Case, good Bills and Bonds, which will all be paid, whenever there is occasion, are a far better Estate than ready Money, which Private or Publick Thieves may break through and Steal from us.

6. *Special Ordinances are special Priviledges.* The Preaching of the Word is an Ordinance that lies open and common to all, and this is a considerable Priviledge; for how should Men be brought to believe without the Word of Faith? But Sacraments which are limited and confin'd in their Administration to select peculiar Persons, are much more considerable, being sensible Signs for the Confirmation of our Faith, when it is wrought in us. Among the many Advantages which the *Israelites* of Old had above all other People, the Apostle reckons up the Covenants and

and the Promises, *Rom. 9. 4.* I do not know any Thing to the contrary, but that the Covenants there may be meant of the two Seals of the Covenant under the Old Testament, Circumcision and the Passover (to which we have our correspondent Seals under the New Testament) for Circumcision particularly is called, not only a Token of the Covenant, but the Covenant in their Flesh, who were Circumcised, *Gen. 17. 13.* Now all Sacraments are visible Promises, God holds forth to our very sight, what may serve for the Encouragement of our Faith, and the directing of our Hearts to Christ on whom we Believe.

II. Exhortation.

1. *Come to God in Christ for the Performance of his Promises to you.* Two Things lye in this one.

1. *Plead the Promises with God, lay bold of them, and humbly challenge your share in them.* Put him in remembrance of what he hath said, *Psalms 119. 49. Remember thy Word unto thy Servant, &c. 1 Chron. 17. 26, 27. Thou art God, and hast promised this goodness to thy Servant, now therefore let it please thee to bless, &c.* Do not say, what have I a Sinner to do with the Promises of Grace: Thou hast a sufficient warrant from the free offer of God's Grace in Christ, and the express Command of God to believe. 'Tis thy Duty to comply with his Invitation, and rely on his Promise of Acceptance. 'Tis no Presumption in the filthiest Soul that ever was, to urge God with his good Word, *Ezek. 36. 29. I will save you from all your Uncleanesses.* If the Promises do not belong to those that see themselves undone,
and

and are under a Sense of their unworthiness to receive any help, they belong to none.

2. *Plead them in Christ, or else your Prayers will miscarry, and the Promise never be performed to you.* Take heed of having an Eye to self, or of imagining that they should be made good to you for your own sake. An excellent Author, (*A. Burges*) calls this an Ivy-sin, which sticks so close to our Natures, that it secretly consumes and devours All, look to Jesus if you desire to speed. Expect not that God should say *Amen* to any Prayer, in which we have not a respect to Christ, as the only Person in whom the Promises are *Amen*. This I take to be the Evangelical Sense of that Prophecie, *Isa. 65. 15, 16. The Lord God shall call his Servant by another Name, that he who blesteth himself in the Earth, shall bless himself in the God of Truth; viz. in Jesus Christ.*

2. *Consider Christ as the true Foundation of your own Stability.* Read the Words following the Text, *ver. 21.* As the Promise of God have their Establishment by Christ, so we also are established in him. We stand by Faith, and our Faith subsists by the Power of Christ, or else it will fail the very next Moment, after it is produced, Christ dwelling in our Hearts, is the Strength of our Hearts; *Col. 2. 7. Rooted, and built up in him, and stablished in the Faith, &c.* They that seem to be Pillars, are but sorry Reeds without him, which every wind of Temptation will bend or break. The same glorious Power which upheld him in the working out of your Redemption, must likewise sustain you in the Exercise of Faith upon him; or else you will quickly Experience your sinful weakness by a miserable Fall.

3. Set

3. *Set a just value upon the Promises of God, as unchangeable Assurances of his Love and Grace.* Remember how much greater the Testimony of God is then the Witness of Men, and therefore receive it with answerable Joy. We read of exceeding great and precious Promises being given unto us. 2 Pet. 1. 4. They are so in themselves, and should be so to us. Men of all Degrees are Vanity and a Lye, of doubtful and uncertain Credit, and we cannot depend much upon what they say; they often out-live their own Promises, and grow weary of performing them, or if not, yet their Promises dye with them, and then what are we the better? But we cannot prize any Divine Promise more than they deserve, because we can never be deceiv'd by them in any of our Expectations from them.

4. *Let no appearing impossibilities make you Question God's Accomplishment of any of his gracious Words.* Though you cannot see how the Thing can be done, 'tis enough, if God hath said, that he will do it. There can be no Obstructions to promised Salvation, which we need to Fear. He who is the God of this Salvation, and the Author of the Promise, will prepare his own Way for the doing of his own Work, so that every Valley shall be filled, and every Mountain and Hill brought low, Luke 3. 5. Though the Valleys be so deep, that we cannot see the bottom, and the Mountains so high that we cannot see the Tops of them, yet God knows how to raise the one, and level the other, Isa. 63. 1. *I that speak in Righteousness (or faithfulness) am mighty to save.* If any Thing would keep back the Kingdom of Christ, it would be our Infidelity; but he will come, though he should find no Faith on the Earth. See Rom. 3. 3.

5. *Cast not away your confidence because God defers his performances.* Though Providences run cross; though they move backwards and forwards, you have a sure and faithful Word to rely upon. Promises, though they be for a time, seemingly delay'd, cannot be finally frustrated. Dare not to harbour such a thought within your selves, as *Psal. 77. 8. Doth his promise fail for evermore?* The Being of God may as well fail as the Promise of God; That which does not come in your time, will be hastned in his time, which is always the *more convenient season.* Accuse not him of slowness, who hath said, *I come quickly, i. e. he comes as soon as all things are ready and ripe for his appearance.* 'Tis as true, *that the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, 2 Pet. 3. 9.* as that he is never guilty of breaking his Promise. Wait therefore, how long soever he tarry, do not give over expecting; the Heart of God is not turn'd though his Face be hid; and Prayers are not flung back, though they be not instantly answer'd.

6. *You who are in Christ, take Example from the Promises of God.* You are under the obligation of many solemn Promises made to God, Wo be unto you, if you do not look to a careful and diligent performance of them. See *Neb. 5. 13.* You have entred into a sacred Oath, and consequentially into a dreadful Curse, if you do not according to that Oath. Remember *David's* Resolution, and imitate his practice, *Psal. 119. 106. I have sworn, and I will perform it, &c.* You who have Vowed constant Service and Subjection to God (as you have done, if you own any Relation to him) beware of violating that Vow, and let it be in the thoughts of your hearts for ever.

ever. How should unstable Souls be shamed out of their un-even Walkings, by the strict engagements in which they stand, and by the Pattern which an immutable God hath set before them! Surely his Truth and Firmness to us should be a strong Argument against our being loose and wavering from him. What can we think of our selves, that God should be ever mindful of his Covenant, and we yet remain so unstedfast in it? Let us therefore this day resolve once more, and to better purpose than hitherto, in the strength of Christ, that we will improve God's Promises for the fastening of our own; his gracious Promises to the binding of our righteous Promises, that in whatsoever things we have opened our Mouths to the Lord, we may not by contrary acts make our tongues to fall upon our selves.

SER.

SERMON VII.

December 31. 1695.

PSALM LXXX. xvii, xviii. former Part.

*Let thy Hand be upon the Man of thy right
Hand, upon the Son of Man whom thou
madest strong for thy Self.*

18. *So will not we go back from Thee : —*

IT is most manifest from several Passages in this *Psalms*, that it refers to a Time of great Distress and Desolation in general, though what particular Time is here pointed at, is variously Conjectur'd, and indeed after all remains uncertain. There is one Request for deliverance out of this calamitous Case, which is thrice Repeated, *ver. 3, 7, 19.* in the former Part of which Request, there is a kind of Gradation observ'd, every Time 'tis mention'd, *Turn us again Oh God; turn us again Oh God of Hosts; and turn us again Oh Lord God of Hosts;* But the latter Part is still the same, and no difference made in the Repetition; *Cause thy Face to shine, and we shall be saved.* But yet there is no Petition throughout the *Psalms*, which is so remarkable,

markable, or that seems to carry such an Evangelical Sense in it, as that in the Text.

For Explication, there are Three Things to be enquir'd into.

1. *Who is intended here by the Man of God's right Hand, and the Son of Man, &c?* Some think, it signifies the People of the Jews, the whole Common-Wealth of *Israel*, who are sometimes collectively spoken of, as one Man, and a single Person; others take it for the House of *David*, and Royal Family, or for the Stock and Tribe of *Judah*, out of which our Lord was to spring; but the Characters here given do much better agree to the *Messiah* himself, if we duly consider them.

1. *The Man of thy Right Hand.* This imports one highly favoured and respected by God; as *Benjamin*, which is a Son of the right Hand, (and named, *ver. 2.*) was his Father's darling. The right Hand is a beloved Member, as is intimated by the Command to Cut it off, *if it offend*, *Mat. 5. 30.* So is Christ peculiarly dear to God, his Delight and Joy from Everlasting, and exalted to sit at his Right Hand; a Place too great for any Creature, *Psalms 110. 1.*

2. *The Son of Man.* This is a Title most frequently given to Christ in the Gospel, and in the Old Testament also, *Dan. 7. 13. I saw in the Night-Visions, and behold one like the Son of Man, &c.* Which denotes the Truth of Christ's Humane Nature, though he came not by ordinary Generation.

3. *One made strong by God for himself.* As *ver. 15. The Branch which thou madest strong for thy*

thy self. Now, as Christ is often call'd the Branch by the Prophets, so he was really furnished and endued (as Mediator) with extraordinary Power to serve the great Purposes and Designs of God, such as could have been accomplished by no other. And so it was foretold, that he should be, *Isa. 41. 10. I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right Hand of my Righteousness.*

2. *What is meant by the Thing requested, let thy Hand be upon, &c.* If we consider some other Places where the like Phrase is used, we shall find, it implies Influence, Protection and Support; as *Ezra 8. 31. The Hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the Hand of our Enemy, &c. Ezek. 3. 14. I went in the heat of my Spirit, but the Hand of the Lord was strong upon me;* the Prophet being then under a mighty Divine Impression, beyond what other common Persons were, or even he himself at other Times.

3. *How are we to understand the Connexion of this Petition with the following Words, so will not we go back from thee.* It may be understood two Ways.

1. *As it would oblige them to the yielding of stedfast Obedience;* it would lay them under a special Engagement never to Revolt any more, as they had done; if God would grant this Request, it would be a most eminent Tie and Bond upon them to the most constant and faithful Service.

2. *As it would enable them to yield such Obedience.* And this I conceive to be chiefly aimed at; if God would lay such help upon Christ

for them, they should receive Power by that means to discharge their Duty to him better than ever heretofore; though they were very feeble and wavering, false and treacherous of themselves, yet here would be a successful Remedy.

Note 1. *The Consideration of Jesus Christ is very fit and proper to Minister Comfort and Relief in the most afflicted Condition.* That State of the Church which this Psalm hath a Relation to, was very deplorable, but they encouraged themselves by looking to the promised Saviour. When their Vineyard was burnt with Fire, and cut down, *ver. 16.* They had an Eye to him that was the true Vine, whom God exercises with Care and Husbandry about, that his pleasant and useful Fruit can never be destroy'd, *John 15. 1.*

Note 2. *It was the commendable Practice of the Church in the Old Testament Times to Pray for Christ:* This was according to the Precept; *Psalm 72. 15. Prayers shall be made for him continually.* They pray'd for his Assistance in his Work, and for his actual Mission to perform it; that he might be sent into the World, and that what he undertook might prosper in his Hand. Nor is the Duty now out of Date, of Praying for his second Coming, for the Advancement of his Interest, and Enlargement of his Kingdom here below. But the main Scope of the Words, will lead us to another Point.

Obf. *The Strength of Christ is the great and immediate Security of Believers against Apostacy from God.* Here,

1. Shew

I. Shew wherein lies the true Nature of this Apostacy.

II. Of what Concernment it is to Believers to be secur'd against it.

III. How is the Strength of Christ their Security in this Case.

IV. Why hath God order'd it so to be.

V. Use.

I. *Wherein lies the true Nature of Apostacy from God.* The very Expression whereby the Holy Ghost does here describe and set it forth, will, if duly weigh'd, give us some Light into it.

1. *Every failure and defect in the Exercise of Grace, is not to be reckon'd as an Apostacy.* There is a great Difference between spiritual Decaies and Languishings, and this going back from God. The Soul may faint and flag in the pursuit of God, and yet not be carried off so far, as to steer a contrary Course. *As a Schism in the Body*, 1 Cor. 12. 25. Is much less than a Separation from the Body; a breach or disunion in a Church, not so much as an absolute Rent and dividing from a Church, so there may be Declensions in our Obedience, and yet no declining from the Law, *Psalm 119. 51.* The Degrees of Grace may be remitted, when the actings of Grace are not destroyed; and the habits of Grace weakened, when they are not abolished. As the Church of *Ephesus* did not cease to Love, yea even in Sincerity, though charg'd with leaving her first Love, *Rev. 2. 4.* Christ says, he had *somewhat* against her, which is a diminishing term, but he would have had

much more against her, if instead of an abatement of Love, it had been turned into hatred. These gradual Deficiencies and Shrinkings of Grace, are truly humbling to us, and may issue worse, if not carefully lookt after; we have Reason to lament them, and endeavour a speedy Cure of them; but such a revolting from God, as the Text speaks of, is more than all this comes to.

2. *Every positive Discovery of Corruption in the actual Commission of Sin is not Apostacy.* A Man may halt and slip, yea he may stumble, and fall, and yet not go back. He that resolutely holds on his way, may notwithstanding oftentimes, through Ignorance or Infirmary turn aside out of it, before he finishes his Course. A Believer may be led into Captivity to the Law of Sin, and yet never properly is brought under the Reigning Power of Sin, *Rom. 6. 14.* compar'd with *7. 23.* To be violently seized by another as an Enemy, is a very distinct thing from submitting to another's Dominion, as a Lord. A Subject may continue Loyal to his Rightful Prince, though the Arms of a wrongful Usurper may for a Time prevail against him. A voluntary Transferring of my Allegiance, is much more than to be taken Prisoner by force. Rebellion is an aggravating Addition to Sin, *Job 34. 37.* Now Apostatizing in Scripture is very frequently exprest by Rebelling, *Josh. 22. 29.* *God forbid that we should Rebel against the Lord, and turn this Day from following the Lord, &c. Dan. 9. 5.* *We have done wickedly and rebelled, by departing from thy Precepts, &c.* Every Offence against a Law is not an Act of Treason, or Renunciation of the Sovereign Authority.

All

All Sin is a Transgression, but this Sin of backsliding is *the great Transgression*.

3. *Apostacy from God includes not only a Deviation in the Life, but an Alienation of the Heart.* Not only a sinful wandering; but a loving to wander, *Jer. 14. 10. Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their Feet.* So long as the Heart is right with God, it cannot be said that the Man goes back from him. An unwilling Departure, is not so much the Act of the regenerate Person, *as of the Sin that dwelleth in him, Rom. 7. 17.* No outward Performance, good or bad, does denominate so much as the inward frame and working of the Spirit. A great many miscarriages will be graciously overlookt in the visible Walk and Conversation, when there is a cleaving to God with full Purpose of Soul. The Errors of a Man's way are far more pardonable, than erring in Heart. The Generation whom God was so much griev'd with, *were a People that did err in their Hearts, Psalm 95. 10.* Though there be no manifest or gross backsliding in the Life, yet if there be a revolting and a rebellious Heart, there is the poysonous Root of all Abomination. Here is Apostacy in the sight of God, though not in the sight of Men; as the *Israelites in their Hearts turned back again into Egypt, when they were marching in the Wilderness, Acts 3. 39.* According as the Mind is estrang'd from God, or keeps close to him, a Man is clear or guilty in this Case. *Our Heart is not turned back,* was the Church's Vindication, *Psalm 44. 18.*

4. *Apostacy from God, is really an undoing of all the good which we have done.* 'Tis a wicked Repentance quite contrary to the Grace of Re-

pentance; as that is a Repentance from dead Works, so is this a Repentance from Works of a better sort, *Psalms 36. 3. He hath left off to be wise, and to do good.* 'Tis a Perversion to Evil after a seeming Conversion from it. The first Apostacy wherein all are involved, supposes the Creation of Man in a State of Uprightness; *Every one is gone back, Psalm 53. 3.* Therefore *Adams* Original Course was a walk with God. So here, the Apostacy whereof we speak is a miserable change for the worse, after a plausible change (at least) for the better. There can be no going back, but where a Man hath once run well; *No looking back, but where a Man hath first set his Hand to the Plough, Luke 9. ult.* 'Tis ending in the Flesh, after we have begun in the Spirit; when our Faces have been towards *Sion*, and our doings framed to turn to God, this is a revoking and disannulling of all, and driving towards Hell. 'Tis a Declaration of War, where we have pretended Friendship; 'tis a saying in Effect, the Time past sufficeth us to have wrought the Will of God, and therefore now we will Work our own. In short, 'tis no less than our pulling down all that we have built up, and a listing of our selves in the Service of Sin and Satan, whom we have fought against.

II. *Of what Concernment and Importance it is to Believers to be secur'd against such Apostacy.* This will appear from two Things; their Danger of Apostacy, and their Danger by it.

1. *How much they are in Danger of it, viz. If left alone, and abandon'd to themselves.* There are Three Considerations which will sufficiently

ently shew the greatness of this hazard.

1. *Grace in us is very weak.* The Apostle does not say, be strong in the Grace which is in thy self, but *in the Grace which is in Christ*, 2 Tim. 2. 1. That fulness of Grace, of which Christ is the subject, can never be lessen'd, but those measures of Grace which are communicated unto us, and lodg'd in us, might and would be lost, if we were separated from him. Borrowed Abilities will fail, if not continually recruited and supplied. All created inhærent Holiness, of it self is a perishable Thing; 'tis indeed made of God an abiding incorruptible Seed in Believers now, but 'tis not so in its own Nature. If it were, how could the Angels in Heaven, or *Adam* in *Paradise* have ever fallen? Grace is a good Treasure in the Heart, but it wants Almightyness to guard it; as there is no Worldling who thinks, that his Bags or Coffers can defend themselves. Gracious Habits are the true Riches, but they lye open for Thieves to rob us of them; except God keep our House after he hath furnisht it, Poverty will come upon us like an armed Man.

2. *Corruption in us is very Active.* We are very apt and ready to be drawn away by our own Lust, James 1. 14. *There is Folly enough remaining in the wisest and best of Men to pervert and mislead them.* He was no ordinary Saint, who complain'd of his being *so foolish and ignorant*, that he was *as a Beast before God*, Psalm 73. 22. There is still too much Brute in him that hath attain'd to be more than a Man. None of us are so washed from our filthiness, while we are in this World, but that the Reliques of a swinish Principle in our Natures would make us

return to wallow in the Mire, if God did not keep us back. If we consider how just *Lot* linger'd in going out of sinful *Sodom*, we cannot but think, that he would have lookt behind him, as well as his Wife, except those Inclinations had been restrain'd. Though our Hearts be Circumcis'd to Love God predominantly, there are vile Affections stirring in us still, not very easie to be suppress'd. The Law in our Members is not like a dead Letter, but a lively Principle, which Wars against the Laws of our Minds.

3. *The Temptations which come against us, are very numerous.* Every Place, every Condition, every Employment, every Relation is full of them. 'Tis hard to avoid being assaulted by them, 'tis harder many Times to escape being overcome. Wheresoever we are, we find our selves, like the Prophet in *Dathan*, 2 Kings 6, 14. *Compass'd about with a great Host.* Every Friend of God hath many Adversaries always besieging him, and often solliciting and labouring to seduce him from his Obedience to God. *When Solomon was Old* (and when one would have Thought, he should have been the more confirm'd in the pure Religion) *his Wives* (who were therein the Instruments of Satan) *turned his Heart after other Gods*, 1 Kings 11. 4. The Devil manages his Point with so much subtilty, as even to make use sometimes of sincere mistaken Christians to Hand his Suggestions to us; as *Acts* 21. 4. When *Paul* by a Divine impulse was going up to *Jerusalem*, *there were some Disciples who said that he should not go*; through the Spirit they knew what he would suffer there if he went; and as carnal Men, they dissuaded him

him from it. The Old Man within, and Old Serpent without us, make it very difficult to keep our Way.

2. *How much danger they incur by Apostacy, if they should be left to be guilty of it.* Three Particulars will give us a sufficient discovery of this.

1. *They must needs at the present, lose all comfortable Communion with God.* How can they that go back from him, have any Enjoyment of him? How can they that go out from the Presence of the Lord, suppose that his Presence should follow them in their degenerate Course? Must not he that turns his back upon God, acknowledge it the natural Fruit of his own Ways, if the Face of God be hid from him? *The Lord is with you, while you be with him,* 2 Chron. 15 2. But if we forsake our own Mercies, do we imagine, that they will not also forsake us? God's backsliding Children have sadly Experienced the Truth of this, by lying long under their Father's frowns; he hath suspended the sweet Manifestations of himself, and they have not known where to find him, even after they have come to themselves again.

2. *They can never see the Kingdom of God, unless they remember from whence they are gone back, and return and do their first Works.* While a Man is in a Road of Apostacy, he is quite out of the Way to Heaven, and 'tis impossible ever to reach the End, without returning into the Way. None are further off from the Kingdom, then they that once seem'd to be the nearest to it, and afterwards Revolt. None more hateful to God, than such as have once express'd much Love; as a Prince is most provoked by those
that

that first appear very zealously for him, and then turn maliciously against him. God hath said, *If any Man draw back, my Soul shall have no Pleasure in him*, Heb. 10. 38. God will never endure such an one to stand in his sight, that dare to quit and renounce his Service, after he hath been for a season employed in it.

3. *If they come back to God again*, (as undoubtedly they will, if ever they were truly Converted to him) *it must be by very bitter and sorrowful Repentance*. With what Indignation does the Apostle speak, 1 Cor. 6. 15. *Shall I take the Members of Christ, and make them the Members of an Harlot?* And is there not as much Cause for the same Holy Indignation against a Man's self, after he hath done so? The Case is the same as to all others Sin's of such a kind, which are more than common Defilements. When backsliding Israel was about returning, *The Voice of Weeping was heard upon their high Places*, Jer. 3. 21. How plentifully should we sow in Tears, when like those Jews, we have been scattering our Ways to strangers! How should we sit in the Dust, go softly, be covered with Confusion, and lye down in our Shame, in the Sense of what we have done, when we have done so wickedly! He that can pass over a foul Apostacy with little remorse and sleight Humiliation, is under a Delusion, if he think that God hath graciously receiv'd him.

III. *How is the Strength of Christ our Security in this Case?* Answer in five Things.

1. *Omnipotence belongs to Christ, on the account of his Godhead, and this shall be exerted on the behalf of them that believe, as there is occasion,*
Prov.

Prov. 8. 14. *I have Strength.* They are the Words of Christ, who is brought in speaking under the Name of Wisdom. It is not meant of any created, borrowed Strength, such as Angels are said to excel in, but infinite essential Strength; the Strength of God, for he is God. *The mighty Angels are his*, 2 Theff. 1. 7. made and govern'd by him, to wait upon him, and Minister to him; but he himself hath a nobler and greater Character, *The mighty God*, Isa. 9. 6. Yea, *the Almighty*, Rev. 1. 8. *The Almighty Son of an Almighty Father*, yet not another, but the same *Almighty God*; a distinct Person invested with all the glorious Properties of the same Nature. Here lies the Argument which Christ himself used, *John 10. 28. None shall pluck them out of the Father's Hand, because he is greater than all; and consequently none shall pluck them out of Christ's Hand, because he and the Father are one.* The Strength is equal, because the Essence is undivided.

2. *Christ was anointed with Power, as Mediator, the Improvement whereof is not to his own Advantage, but the Advantage of those that believe in him. He that travail'd in the greatness of his Strength, declares himself Mighty to Save*, Isa. 63. 1. Therefore we read of God's raising up an *Horn of Salvation for us*, Luke 1. 69. An Horn intimates Strength; Christ is a mighty Saviour, and our Salvation is the End and Scope of his being so. *He had a Spirit of might resting upon him*, Isa. 11. 2. Great and singular Abilities for his special Work communicated to him, and the Fruit of all redounds to us. Hence he is call'd *Emmanuel, the strong God with us*, not only so in himself, but as our Redeemer; as 'tis said

said in the Case of the Deliverance of the Jews from *Babylon*, which was figurative of a greater and more excellent Deliverance; *their Redeemer is strong*, Jer. 50. 34.

3. *Christ hath destroy'd the Power of the Devil, by a Power Superiour to him*. This is meant by his *dividing the Spoil with the strong*, Isa. 53. 12. Snatching of poor Captive Souls as a Prey out of the Teeth of the Devourer, which being once rescued, are never given up again. The Devil was the strong Man armed, that kept his Palace, and his Goods were in Peace, but our Lord who was stronger than he, came upon him, and overcame him, and took from him all his Armour, wherein he trusted, Luke 11. 21, 22. None but Christ the Prince of Life, was able to do such Execution upon the Prince of this World, whose Slaves and Vassals we naturally are. But this being done, by Vertue of Christs Victory, we also shall be finally Victorious. Satan would have despis'd our utmost Opposition, if the Son of God had not foil'd him first; now we may despise his. Our Triumphant Friend hath left us a Conquer'd Enemy to deal with; so that through him strengthening us, we may tread down Strength.

4. *Christ by the matchless Efficacy, and Merit of his Blood hath purchas'd for us Confirming Grace, and the perpetual Presence of the Spirit with us*. Not only our access into that Grace wherein we stand, but our standing in that Grace wherein to we have Access, is by *Jesus Christ*, Rom. 5. 2. He hath engag'd positively, that the Spirit shall not only be given to us, but abide and dwell with us, John 14. 16, 17. And he hath engag'd for nothing, but what he hath effectually procur'd.

cur'd. The Sufferings of the best of Creatures are weak and worthless; but the Death of Christ is of such Infinite force, as to make it impossible for any one whose Sins he hath dyed for, to dye in Sin, *By one Offering he hath perfected for ever them, &c. Heb. 10. 14.* We have deserv'd to fail of the Grace of God, he hath deserv'd the Continuance of it; we deserve to be as Chaff which the Wind drives away, Christ hath deserved that we should be as Mount Sion, *which cannot be removed.* His Blood is that which Answers all Things.

5. *Christs prevailing Intercession secures to us the needful actual succours of Grace, while we are here in this World.* There is a great deal which depends upon this; *Heb. 7. 25. He is able to save to the uttermost such as come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make Intercession for them.* Christs Everlasting Intercession is mention'd as the Reason of Christs Ability to save to the uttermost. Indeed all Christs Pleadings are irresistible, God can deny him nothing which he asks; therefore he is called by the Name of *Israel, Isa. 49. 3.* A Name which was given to the Patriarch *Jacob*, upon the success of his wrestling with the Angel; for it may be more eminently applied to Christ, what was said of him, *That by his Strength he hath Power with God, Hos. 12. 3.* Christ produces his strong Reasons which the Father cannot but hearken to. So that if he Pray for *Peter*, that his Faith may not fail, it is impossible that it should. If he Pray for our being kept, we cannot be lost.

SERMON VIII.

January 14. 1695.

PSALM LXXX. xvii, xviii. former Part.

Let thy Hand be upon the Man of thy right Hand, upon the Son of Man whom thou madest strong for thy Self.

18. *So will not we go back from Thee : —*

IV. **W***Hy hath God order'd it so, that Believers should be secur'd against Apostacy by the Strength of Christ? The Reasons of the Divine Will in this Case, may be such as these Six following.*

1. *This agrees with God's general Design of beaping all the Glory possible upon Jesus Christ. Never was such Honour and Majesty laid upon any Creature, nor was indeed fit to be laid upon any, as was laid upon Jesus Christ. This was a Part of the Message which the Angel brought to his Virgin-Mother, concerning the Son whom she was to conceive and bear, He shall be great; Luke 1. 32. He was that Son of Man, whom God resolv'd peculiarly to magnifie, and advance above all. That all should be beholden*

to him, and have their Dependance on him. *I will set him on high, says God, Psalm 91. 14.* He shall be the Head of my Family in Heaven and Earth; he shall be as the first-born among many Brethren; I will give him an universal Preheminence, and put all Things in a State of necessary subjection: He shall be the *Joseph* to whom every one's *Sheaf* shall bow down, and whom all in my House shall be nourish'd by, and receive their subsistence from, This was the Glory which the Father determined from Everlasting to give to Christ, to make him the unmovable Center of the whole Creation of God, *Eph. 1. 10.* *That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, &c.* that nothing should be firm or steady but what is brought into him, The Tenure of all the Good that we enjoy, is therefore in Christ, *In the Lord have I righteousness and Strength, Isa. 45. 24.* What we have in Him, we hold by Him alone; What is given for his sake, is secur'd by his means, that he may be every way glorious.

2. This suits with God's Design of Grace in our eternal Election; for we are chosen in Christ, *Eph. 1. 4.* Therefore 'tis fit that we should be also preserv'd in Christ, *Jude 1.* God's chusing of us, is a giving of us to Christ; 'tis often express'd so in Scripture; and therefore who so fit to be their Security, as he to whom they are given? Christ hath the Care of all whom the Father chuses, and he is to give account of them at last. They are committed to him, and will be demanded from him, and therefore where should strength be lodg'd for their support and establishment, so properly as with him? *John. 6. 39.* *This is the Father's Will who hath sent me, that of all which he*
hath

hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again, &c. to prevent their being finally lost. God gives 'em to Christ; this is God's End and Aim; but how shall the Loss be prevented, except we have Strength and Stability from Christ, whose *Charge* and *Trust* we are? That God's Foundation might *stand sure*, he lays his own Son for a Foundation; Every Stone in the Building rests upon Him, or else there would be no difference between them and those that are out of the Building; for he must keep those that are in it from dropping out. It would have been a vain thing to constitute Christ the Head of God's Elect, if God had not also appointed that the Elect by his Influence, should be inviolably maintained to the very last.

3. 'Tis necessary that we should be secur'd against Apostacy by the strength of Christ, because he is the *First and the Last* in our Sanctification. He stiles himself *the Beginning and the End*, Rev. 21.6. So he is not only in himself, but with respect to the Work of Grace in us; He begins it, and compleats it, *the Author and Finisher of our faith*, Heb. 12. 2. i. e. The First Author and Finisher of it. Now 'tis impossible that he should be so, without being our Establisher and Preserver all the time between. From the *First* to the *Last* we must be upheld by him, or else all that is wrought in us will quickly come to nothing. If he do not strengthen his own work, it will be soon destroy'd, tho' it be his own, Psal. 68. 28. *Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us.* Another Hand is not able to preserve what his Hand produces. The best Beginnings will have the worst Endings, if any thing less than the Power of Christ have the Management
of

of them. So that Christ will lose the Glory of our begun Sanctification, unless he undertakes for our settled Confirmation; and he never will have the Honour of our perfected Sanctification, except he enables us to hold on in the way that we have enter'd.

4. *'Tis necessary that Christ should secure us in our Way to Glory, because 'tis his Business to receive us into the Possession of that Glory at the close of all.* John 14. 3. *If I go and prepare a Place for you, I will come again, and receive you to my self, &c.* The Reception of departing Souls to Heaven at Death is the Act of Christ, and so is the Sentencing of them to an Eternal Abode in Heaven at the general Judgment. 2 Tim. 4. 8. *Henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge shall give me at that Day, &c.* But who shall there be to wear this Crown, if Christ do not keep them in the way of Righteousness, till that Day comes? Mat. 25. 34. *Then shall the King say unto them on the Right Hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom, &c.* But where will any such Persons be found, if abandon'd by Christ, while they are here in this World? This is to be the Portion of Christ's Sheep indeed, but the Wolf will have scatter'd them all, if he do not defend them, before that Time. There will be no Heirs to this Inheritance, unless he that bought it for them, take Care that they may not alienate it from themselves.

5. *The Wisdom of God is hereby seen in a most shameful baffling of the Devil.* Though all the Posterity of the first Man are utterly weaken'd and disabled by Sin, yet the Man Christ Jesus is become a Fountain of spiritual Strength to his

own Seed. The Devil Triumpht over the Old *Adam*, as having cast down many wounded in the foiling of that one; but here is a second *Adam*, assuming the very same Nature, that Triumphs over him, and helps us to Triumph also. Flesh and Blood was conquer'd by him in *Paradise*, but here is a Partaker of Flesh and Blood, that puts him to flight. Though Man alone could not grapple with him, but fell by his first assault, yet God-man hath bruis'd him under our Feet, and given us a firmer standing. The Devil must now pull down the Banners which he had set up; because his Head is broken by the Woman's Seed. One that once dwelt among us, in such an House of Clay as we do, hath deliver'd us from him, and fortified us against him. Though he gave us a Mortal blow in our first Parents, here's the Son of Man hath quicken'd us again, and is the Strength of our Life.

6. *Believers could not have a better Security, than that whereof there hath been a visible Experiment in the Person of Christ himself.* His Strength is a tryed Strength; if it had not been enough for us, it had failed him; but if it sustained him in so difficult a Work against so much Resistance both from Earth and Hell, we cannot fear its falling short. Christ had a Work upon his Hands, that all the Angels in Heaven could not have done; and yet he went through it. Christ was tempted in all Points like as we are, and a great deal more than we are, yet the Tempter could fasten nothing upon him. He never flinch't from what he undertook, but pursued his first Engagement, till all Things foretold concerning him had an End. *Isa. 50. 5. The Lord God hath opened my Ear, and I was not Rebellious neither turned away back.*

back. He went on, though there was a Lion in his Way, the Roaring Lion, yea though God himself came forth with his drawn Sword of Justice, as an Adversary against him, for our sakes. This may give us the more Encouragement to believe, that he can and will keep us also from going back.

V. Use. *Several Things are to be learnt as Truths, and urg'd as Duties from this Doct.* Some Things for the informing of Judgment, and others for the directing of the Practice.

I. *Information.*

1. *What a wretched Case must they be in, that are out of Christ?* The Apostle calls them unstable Souls, that are easily beguil'd; and how can they be otherwise? 2 Pet. 2. 14. The Devil does with them as he will, carries them whither he pleases, for there can be nothing to hinder him, where the Power of Christ does not rest upon their Persons. Such as partake not of the Root, that do not derive a Vertue from thence, are like dead Branches, or wither'd Leaves, which may hang on for a Time, but will certainly be blown off by some Wind or other. Hypocrites that are in Christ by outward Profession only, are like Meteors which glitter and blaze a while, but they are soon spent, and tumble to the ground; but the Stars in Christs Right Hand (Rev. 1. 16.) cannot do so. They that belong to Christ, have their Preservation from him, but 'tis no wonder to hear that all others miscarry. *Those that thou gavest me, I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the Son of Perdition,* John 17. 12. And this Son of Perdition,

tion, was none of them; not given in order to Salvation, but Apostleship. That goodness which Christ does not establish, must needs be as a Morning Cloud; no Creature can escape a fall that stands upon its own Bottom. All counterfeit Graces, plausible Duties, fair Shews, and false Joys, will vanish and come to nothing, because the Persons whose they are, are separated from Christ, and have no Strength or Support by him.

2. *This discovers the Reason of the Difference which there is oftentimes between one Believer and another.* Their Strength is not in themselves but in Christ, and from him it is variously communicated and dispens'd, according as he sees good. Hence it is that they who have obtain'd like precious Faith, are not equally strong in Faith; and they that are risen up to greater Attainments come short sometimes as to spiritual Acts. Some that have been best furnish'd with the Habits of Grace, have at particular Seasons been most defective in the very Exercise of Grace, and betray'd more than others of their own Corruption. Weaker Christians have done better, in resisting of some Temptations, than such as have been a great deal stronger. The Women that followed Christ (though the weaker Vessels) denied not Christ, as *Peter* did, though a more eminent Disciple; for though Christ pray'd, *that his Faith might not fail*, he did not Pray that he might not faulter. It was said to the Church of *Philadelphia*, *Thou hast a little Strength, and hast kept my Word, and hast not denied my Name*, Rev. 3. 8. The weakest Christians will stand with Christs help, and the strongest cannot stand without it.

3. *This*

3. *This shews how there comes to be such a Difference and inequality in the same Believer at several Times.* Sometimes he withstands a greater Temptation, and at other Times is foil'd by a lesser; because no Man, not the best of Men prevails by his own Strength, but according as Strength is given out from Christ to succour and assist him. One while *David* is got up so much above carnal fear, that nothing can shake him; he encourages himself in God, and concludes *that he shall not be greatly moved*, Psalm 62. 2. Yea, not moved at all, ver. 6. At another Time, he is so overwhelm'd with horror, so sunk and dispirited, as if there were no Providence to shield him, and therefore cries out for the *Wings of a Dove*, *that he might fly away from the reach of his Enemies*, Psalm 55. 5, 6. The same Soul follows hard after God, when his right Hand upholds it, Psalm 63. 8. Which afterwards flags, and is almost ready to give over following, when that right Hand is withdrawn.

4. *This lays open the ground of the Devils Enmity against Christ, which hath been always most extream and implacable.* He knows, that he should easily compass his Ends upon Believers, if Jesus Christ did not stand in the Way. All the Powers of Darknes were furiously bent against the Person of Christ, because the great Strength of all that belong to him, lies in him. If they could have conquer'd him, no Member of his could ever have stood against them. The Destruction of the Head would have been the Destruction of the whole Body; as when the *Philistines saw that their Champion was dead, they all fled immediately*, 1 Sam. 17. 15. All God's Jewels and peculiar Treasure are laid up and

kept in the Hands of Christ, so that the subduing of him (if it had been possible) would have been the seizing of all at once. What an Exercise hath Christ undergone for our sakes, in bearing both the Wrath of God and the Rage of Hell, when he might have avoided both, if he had not design'd to be a Refuge, and Convert from both to us!

5. *The State of those that are in Christ is greatly amended and improved since the Fall, beyond what it was before.* Never was better Tidings brought to the World, than that; behold I make all Things new. Men are given to change, and often change for the worse; but God's Alterations are always to Advantage. The New Testament Dispensation mightily excels the Old; the latter Days will out-shine and out-do the former Times. *Isa. 60. 17. For Brasses I will bring Gold, and for Iron I will bring Silver, and for Wood Brasses, and for Stones Iron.* That which comes in the room of what is done away, is still of a more valuable Kind. The second Covenant is better than the first, the second Adam more glorious than the first. Sinful Man restor'd, is in a better Condition, than innocent Man as he was Created. A poor Believer is stronger in Christ, than the holiest Angels without Christ; for without Christ no Promises of Perseverance, but in him there are, and such as cannot be broken. *He will not turn away from us, we shall not depart from him, Jer. 32. 40.*

6. *'Tis inexcusable Folly for any one in the World to lean to his own Arm.* As the Holy Ghost says, *that Vain Man would be wise, i. e. 'tis an instance of his Vanity, that he will not be persuaded*

suaded to cease from his own Wisdom; so the Pride of our Hearts makes us very unwilling to suspect our own Strength, or to cast away all Confidence in it. This Pride does not only go before Destruction, but is the Cause of it; Man would be a God to himself, his own Saviour, and Defender, and in thinking himself so, he is his own Destroyer. Nothing does more effectually Ruine us, than the Conceit that we can recover or preserve our selves from Ruine. It is such kind of Presumption which slaies its Ten Thousands; if Men were more sensible of their own Infirmities, and distrustful of their own Abilities, the Devils Kingdom would be empty in Comparison of what it is. To imagine that we can do any Thing without Christ, is the way to undo the Work of God already done. If *Adams* perfect Holiness was not permanent, while he was left alone, how should ours be so, which is imperfect?

7. *Everlasting Strength must fail, before any true Believers can Everlastingly Miscarry.* I say, before any can; for if any one may perish, all may; because it is the same Strength which secures all. Unless the Lord's Hand be shortened, no Soul can ever be pluckt out of it. The Honour of Christ is concern'd and indeed engag'd to see every Child of God brought safe to Heaven; and therefore they may do well to consider what Reproach they cast upon Christ, who (by their Doctrines of Apostacy) make Believers walk with him, (as one said) like sorry Dancers on a Rope, that are every Moment in danger of breaking their Necks. Is Jesus Christ such a strong Helper, and yet may the Gates of Hell prevail against those that are

joyned to him? Hath he pawn'd his unchangeable Word, that the good Part shall not be taken away from those that have once chosen it; *Luke 10. 42.* And shall Men that turn the Gospel upside down, represent it as a doubtful uncertain Portion? Is Grace no better than common Gifts, and outward Blessings? That we may be totally dispossest of the one as well as the other? Nothing can more derogate from our Blessed Lord, or expose him worse than this scandalous Opinion does, as a feeble incompetent Undertaker.

II. Exhortation.

1. *Beware of falling from your own stedfastness,* 2 Pet. 3. 17. This is proper and pertinent Advice to those whose Strength is in Christ, Gospel-Principles breed an Holy, not a Carnal Security. Watchfulness and Diligence, Circumspection and Caution, are necessary in our daily Walk; for they that lay these Things aside, do thereby Declare that they have nothing to do with Christ, nor any Interest in the Privilege I have been speaking of. They are woefully mistaken, who think that infallible Promises render all Exhortations fruitless: The Spirit of God teaches otherwise; 1 *John 2. 27, 28. Ye shall abide in him; and now, little Children, abide in him.* How absurd is it to suppose, that certainty of Perseverance in Grace, should make Men do such Acts as are contrary to Grace, and destructive of it! Or that we should therefore live in the neglect of Means, because we are sure to persevere in the use of them! This is such kind of Divinity, as the Devil's was, *Mat. 4. 6. He shall keep thee,* therefore hazard thy self;

self; his Angels shall bear thee up, therefore cast thy self down.

2. Be not utterly dismayed, when Satan hath gotten any Advantage of you, through your sinful Weakness. Be duely affected with, and suitably abased for, the least Departure from God, but do not let go your hold of Christ, as if you were irrecoverable. Say not, as the Church in Captivity did, *Lam. 3. 18. My Strength and my Hope is perished from the Lord.* This is a very false and unjust Conclusion, not warranted by the Word of Grace, but a meer Artifice of the Devil. When he tempted you to Revolt, he would also urge you to despair of a return; but though you have complied with him in the one, stand it out against him in the other, *Psalms 145. 14. The Lord upholdeth all that fall, &c.* This seems a Paradox indeed, for how should they fall, if he upholds them? *Ans.* He upholds them so far, that they shall not utterly sink, and he will take Care to raise them up again; do not reckon your selves destroy'd, tho' cast down; *The ransomed of the Lord may be carried Captive into a Land of Enemies, but they shall return and come to Sion with Songs, and Everlasting Joy upon their Heads, Isa. 35. 10.*

3. Take heed of scornful or censorious despising of weaker Brethren. If he that deals to every Man his measure of spiritual Strength, hath afforded more to you, and less to some others in the World, do not lift up your selves above them. *Boast not against the Branches* (those that are Inferiour to thy self) *for thou bearest not the Root, but the Root thee, Rom. 11. 18.* If Jesus Christ were not more liberal to you, than to them, your Soul would be in their Soul's Case.

Case. Judge not those who are upright in their Hearts, though they do err in lesser Points; the Holy Ghost says, they shall be holden up, for God is able to make them stand, *Chap. 14. 4. Trample not upon them that are most bowed down with a Spirit of Infirmary.* There is a respect to be paid to God's halting *Jacob's*, and his *Lame Mephibosheth's*. The greatest and the least of Saints are both depending Creatures, and therefore should carry themselves with all Modesty and Meekness one towards another, *He who establisheth us with you in Christ, is God, 2 Cor. 1. 21.*

4. *Make no Promises of Perseverance in your own Strength.* Learn the contrary of the Psalmist in the Text, who first makes his Request, *Let thy Hand be, &c.* Then expresses his Resolution, *So will not we, &c.* If we Vow continuance with Christ in all Temptations, and intend to pay what we Vow, we must not Account our selves capable of Payment without Assistance from Christ. No Man hath Grace enough to be his own Keeper, or to execute any Purpose of that sort, unless he be still receiving more Grace from Christ's Fulness. A Thing well resolv'd, is half done; but we can never resolve well, unless we do it in the Strength of Christ. *Mic. 4. 5. We will walk in the Name of the Lord our God for ever and ever.* A Phrase which does at once import two Things, that should go together, attendance on God's Service, and reliance on his Power.

5. *Look to your Faith, as the principal Grace, which contributes to your Establishment.* *Isa. 7. 9. If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established.* The contrary is implied, *If you do believe,*

lieve, you surely shall be. The Scripture says more than once, *That by Faith we stand*, Rom. 11. 20. 2-Cor. 1. 24. Which is more than is any where said of any other Grace, and the Reason is evident,

1. *Because Faith is the uniting Grace, and 'tis Union with Christ, which is the ground of our Safety.*

2. *'Tis the receiving Grace; that whereby we do not only receive Christ himself, but all from Christ; and 'tis by Vertue of Strength receiv'd, that we are able to stand.* This is the Grace whereby we do not only receive from Christ at first, but whereby we must be receiving from him all along; for we renew our Strength by waiting upon God, Isa. 40. ult. Which is a Scripture-Phrase for Faith and Patience together. It is the blessedness of those whose Strength is in God, that their Strength is still increasing; *they go from Strength to Strength*, Psalm 84. 5, 7. But without Faith, there's no such Blessedness to be had, the Unbeliever hath no Strength but what is in himself; a meer seeming Strength, and therefore a perishing declining Strength; for from him that hath not, what he seems to have, shall be taken away.

6. *Exercise Faith upon Christ especially in Times of great Temptation and general Defection* Never think to stand long, if you stand loose from Christ; but keep your hold of him, and stick close to him, and then you will be able to stand fast, and having done all to stand, whatever assaults are made upon you, whatever Apostacies are committed by others, continue touching him, and Vertue will still come out of him. Make your Nest in this Rock, when the Devil blows

blows with his Wind; when *Paul* was buffeted with the Messenger of Satan; he besought the Lord that it might depart, and though that was not immediately granted, yet he had a very satisfactory Answer, *My Grace is sufficient for thee, my Strength, &c.* 2 Cor. 12. 7, 8, 9. If it be a Time wherein the Faith of many is Shipwreckt and overthrown, Holy Trust in Christ will be an Anchor to the Soul, sure and steadfast. When many of Christs Disciples went back, and he put the Question to them, *Will you also go away? Peter cries Lord to whom shall we go? (to whom besides thee?)* John 6. 66, 67, 68.

7. Do not arrogate the Honour of your standing in Christ, and abiding with Christ, in the least measure to your selves. Let Christ have all the Glory of your setting out, and holding out; let him have it now, and let him have it at the Last. Ascribe all to him, who is able to keep you from falling, who alone could do it, and hath done it, *Jude* 24. 25. Christ is the Person there meant, for the Presentation of Believers faultless in the great Day belongs to him. Say to him, *Lord by thy Favour thou hast made my Mountain to stand strong, which else had been remov'd and carried away long since; thou hast made me a Pillar in thy Temple, else I had waver'd and gone out again, as well as others. When you Live, and when you Dye, acknowledge this to your Redeemers Praise.*

SERMON IX.

March 24. 1696.

JUDGES XVI. xx. last Clause.

And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him.

THE Person whom these Words concern, was the Twelfth of those Judges, from whom this Book receives its Name, as being the History of the Common-wealth of *Israel*, during their successive Administrations. He was one that had an extraordinary Presence of God with him, which stirr'd him up to, and made him successful in very great and wonderful Undertakings. So we read, *That the Spirit of the Lord began to move him*, Chap. 13. 25. *And came mightily upon him*, Chap. 14. 6. And again, Chap. 15. 14. The first Miscarriage, whereby he forfeited his Privilege, was his Conversation with the Harlot at *Gaza*, and yet God was pleas'd by his special Assistance to let him escape the Danger which that Sin brought him into, *ver. 1, 2, 3.* of this Chapter. The second Debauchery prov'd more fatal; *viz.* the letting out of lustful Affections to *Dalilah*, a Wo-

Woman in the Valley of Sorek, ver. 4. This Sin was followed with others, as the telling of three deliberate repeated lies, ver. 7, 11, 13. And at last consenting to the Violation of his solemn Vow as a *Nazarite*, by the shaving of his Head, ver. 17. One would think from the discovery of such an important Secret, that he had been bereaved of common Prudence, when there were such plain Reasons to suspect a perfidious Design; but so God rightly order'd, that the Folly should be a Punishment of the Sin, and that both should make way for his further Suffering. For as soon as this was done, *his Strength went from him*, ver. 19. His Strength seems to be a peculiar Gift to him, which was to be continued upon the Condition of keeping his Hair uncut, and so that Condition being broken, this Gift was recall'd. Yet the strange Presumption and Stupidity of *Sampson* after all this, may be Matter of Astonishment to us; of which we have an Account in this 20th ver. When *Dalilah* comes to rouse him with the usual Cry, *The Philistines are upon Thee*. See

1. His Presumption, *He awoke out of his Sleep, and said; I will go out as at other Times before, and shake my Self*] How could he imagine this, when he himself had said, that if he were shaven, he should become Weak, and like another Man? How could he expect to do as he had done, when he had so positively foretold his own Fate? Therefore

2. See his Stupidity; [*And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him.*] He said what he did, upon a sudden, at his first awaking, before he found how he was betray'd; before he perceiv'd that his Locks were cut off, and before

fore he consider'd what the Consequents of that would be. He was not instantly apprehensive of the Misery of his Case, through God's just abandoning of him, but depended on the same Assistance which he had formerly receiv'd, till he felt the contrary by woful Desertion. It is a lamentble Truth which these Words do teach us, but yet a Truth which is profitable to be known.

Obf. There may be sad Departures of God from Believers themselves, of which for a while they may remain insensible. Sampson was not only an eminent Type of Christ, in whom the Power of God was gloriously displayed, 1 Cor. 1. 24. But is also reckon'd among those Old Testament worthies, Heb. 11. 32. Of whom 'tis said, notwithstanding their various sinful Infirmities, That these all obtained a good Report through Faith, ver. 39. And therefore this general Doctrine may be built on this Particular Example. In handling of it.

I. What are those Departures of God which even Believers are incident to.

II. What are the Causes and Occasions of them.

III. What are the Effects which follow thereupon.

IV. How far may Believers be insensible hereof.

V. How comes it to pass that they are so.

VI. Use.

I. *What*

I. *What are those Departures of God from Believers, which they are lyable to, and sometimes exercis'd with?* There are Three Things, which must be distinctly enquir'd into, with Respect to this Point.

1. *What are they as to the Kind?*

1. *Not a Loss of the Favour of God, Psalm 89. 33. My Loving Kindness will I not utterly take from him, &c.* 'Tis brought in with a nevertheless, after he had spoken of the visiting of Transgression with the Rod, *ver. 32. God's sharpest Corrections for Sin are no Arguments of his Alienation from the Person; when his Hand goes forth with most Severity against us, his Heart may be still towards us as much as ever. So Isa. 54. 10. The Mountains shall depart, &c. but my Kindness shall not depart from thee.* The Mountains are the most solid and lasting Parts of this lower Creation, yet they may and shall be remov'd, they may by violent Eruptions be carried into the midst of the Sea, they shall be overturn'd at the End of the World; *but the Love of God is Everlasting and Unmoveable.* Where 'tis once fixt, 'tis never to be taken away; *neither Things present, nor to come shall be able to separate us from it.* If the foresight of our Sins did not prevent it, Sins actually committed, shall not displace it. If God bear such a good-will to unbelieving Sinners (for the first fulfilling of the Work of Faith in us, is a Fruit and Evidence of his Love to us) we cannot reasonably suppose that it should afterwards cease to sinning Believers.

2. *'Tis a withdrawing of the Spirit of God, not in Regard of real Presence, but manifest Influence.*

1. *The*

1. *The real Presence of the Spirit is not withdrawn, for this is constant and perpetual.* Both its Constancy and Perpetuity I conceive to be intimated, *John 14. 17. He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.* Where he once makes his abode, he always settles it; he is not an uncertain Guest, but a resolv'd Inhabitant. Believers have the Spirit, when they cannot discern that they have him; for they would be no longer Believers, if they were without the Spirit. We must be cut off from Christ, if the Spirit should be taken from us, for our Union with Christ is maintain'd and secur'd by the indwelling of the Spirit. *1 John 3. 24. Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.* This is a continued Privilege, upon which others depend; for we are no longer the Members of the Lord Jesus, than we are the Temples of the Holy Ghost.

2. *The manifest Influence of the Spirit may be withdrawn; though his Residence be not alter'd, his Operations may be interrupted; in Three Respects, as to Gifts, Graces, and Comforts.*

1. *In Respect of Gifts.* These receive the Name of spiritual Gifts, not only from their Nature, but from the Spirit as the Author; for how various soever they be, they all flow from him as their common Fountain. *There are diversities of Gifts, but the same Spirit, 1 Cor. 12. 4.* Now they that are possessors of these Gifts will find them withering and decaying, and be as though they had none, when the Spirit of God withholds that actual Influence which gives Life and Vigour to them. With what stammering Lips do we speak, when he is not with our Mouths! What poor ignorant Babblers are

we, when he does not enrich us in Utterance and Knowledge!

2. *In respect of Graces.* As the Habits of Grace are infused, so the Actings of Grace are assisted, by the Spirit, and the most strong and lively Christians are very feeble and languid, when he keeps back his quickening Helps. The being of Grace is the Effect of the Spirits planting, the springing of Grace is the Effect of his Watering. The choicest Vine will yield but sorry Grapes (like the shrivell'd Fruits of a dry Tree) when God Commands the Clouds, that they do not Rain upon it. In such a Case, though *the Seed of God remain in a Believer*, 1 John 3. 9. *Yet what he brings forth, is always ready to Dye.*

3. *In respect of Comforts.* All Consolation is the Work of the Spirit, which is certainly more or less, according as he affords or abates his Testimony. *When he sheds abroad the Love of God in the Heart*, there is abounding Hope, and a full Tide of spiritual Joy, Rom. 5. 5. When he refuses or forbears to do this, there's a black Cloud upon all our Evidences, and we find nothing but Trouble and Sorrow. Many Holy Souls have been thus dealt with; *The Comforter that should relieve them, hath been far from them*, Lam. 1. 16. And Faith hath with difficulty subsisted in the midst of perplexing Doubts and restless Fears.

2. *What are those Departures of God as to the Degree?*

1. *The exact Measure or Distance cannot be stated.* We cannot say, that thus far God may go, and no further; for his Dispensations of this sort are very different, with one and with another,

another, yea with the same Believer at several Seasons. Sometimes though he let us go out of his Hand, and do not actually uphold us, yet he is so near to us, as to be ready to catch us when we are falling; sometimes he stands so far off, that he first lets us fall, and then raises us again. Sometimes he is within our reach, when we feel after him, sometimes he is gone a great-length, and we cannot take hold of him. God sets bounds to us which we cannot pass, but we can prescribe no Limits to him. The best are beholden to Sovereign Mercy, when they are at the worst.

2. *God does never totally depart from those, whom he hath once vouchsafed his gracious Presence to.* His immutable Promise is the Believers Security against any such Desertion. *Heb. 13. 5. He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.* The Truth of this Word would be not only shaken but overturn'd, if the forsakings of God were total at any Time. He never leaves us, but in Part; he never leaves us so, but that at the same Time he is still present with us; if he leave us in one respect, he is present in another. When he is with-drawn from us as to Revival, he is yet with us in a way of Support; when he does not Work in us *to Do*, he continues working in us *to Will*. Though the Spirit may retire as one that is griev'd, yet he is not absolutely quencht; there is the Fire, when there is no Flame.

3. *What are they, as to the Duration?*

1. *There is great variety in the dealings of God, as to this also.* The Intervals of his Absence from us are longer or shorter, as he sees good. *He changeth Times and Seasons, not only in a*

Political (*Dan. 2. 21.*) But in a spiritual Sense, as it pleaseth him. Our dead Calms have doubtful Periods; *for his Wind bloweth when it listeth.* Sometimes Christ's renewed Visits are more quick and speedy, and sometimes more slow and lingring, *Song 3. 4. It was but a little that I passed from them, and I found him whom my Soul loveth:* She had just begun her Enquiries after him, when she met with him. So God sometimes comes back at the first call; but Saints do not always fare so; at other Times when they cry and shout, *he shutteth out their Prayer, Lam. 3. 8.*

2. *The Departures of God from true Believers are never final, they may be tedious, but they are Temporary.* As the Evil Spirit is said to depart from Christ for a season, *Luke 4. 13. (Tho' he quitted that Temptation, he did not quit his Delign, so as to Tempt no more)* so the good Spirit withdraws from those that are Christ's, for a Season only, 'tis with a Purpose of coming again. When he hath most evidently forsaken, 'tis as unquestionable, that sooner or later he will return: And the Happiness of his return will richly recompence for the sadness of his Desertion, *Isa. 54. 7. For a small Moment have I forsaken thee, but with great Mercies will I gather thee.* Here is not only a gathering after a forsaking, but great Mercies to make amends for a small Moment. He who hath engag'd to be our God for ever, cannot depart for ever.

II. *What are the Causes and Occasions of these sad Departures?* Among others these are the Chief.

I. *The*

1. *The seeking of our own Credit and Glory, or any other selfish Ends, in our serving of God.* Where Pride is at the beginning of a Duty, shame will be (as one says) the Conclusion; God will make the Body of those Actions to stink which are corrupted with an evil Eye; by the withholding of his Spirit, he will disparage those, who under a pretence of honoring him, do really aim to lift up and magnifie themselves. When Men desire to be extoll'd as Herod once was, *This is the Voice of God and not of Man*, he makes it appear that it is the Voice of a forsaken Man without any thing of God. A plain Sign of this evil is, *when the Spirit that dwelleth in us Lusteth to Envy*, when we are afraid that our Reputations should be diminished, and our Names darken'd by another's shining Brighter. In that Case, we should indeed be troubled, that God is no better serv'd by us, but we should rejoyce that he is better serv'd by others; it should humble us that we are less useful than others, it should not disturb us that we are less esteem'd; this is the way to drive the Spirit of God from us.

2. *Self-Confidence in the Performance of Religious Duties.* The Spirit of God frequently and justly denies his Aid and Help in the carrying on of that Work, which we venture to Undertake without him. We should *never seek the Face of God, without seeking his Strength*, Psalm 105. 4. Divine Power is communicated to us in a way of believing Expectation; Zech. 10. 12. *I will strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk up and down in his Name.* We are likely to succeed best in Holy Services, when we go about them in a distrust of our own Abilities, and

Sence of our own weakness. The greatest Gifts and Graces will fail, by relying on them; and in those very Things wherein Men most abound in their own Apprehensions, they usually fall most short. If we do not look up to God to prepare our Hearts, he will convince us how insignificant our Personal Preparations are. If we Fancy that our own Enlargements will be sufficient, 'tis no wonder, if we find ourselves more straiten'd and indisposed then, than at any other Times.

3. *Self-Appause after the Performance of Religious Duties.* When we Sacrifice to our own Net, the Spirit leaves us to Toyl in casting it to no Purpose. The spiritual Man shall be cast from his Excellency, if he ascribe that to himself which belongs to God. When Grace hath been exercis'd in the highest Measure, the Heart ought to lye lowest under the Consideration of its own nothingness. When *Paul* speaks of his *labouring more abundantly than they all*, he corrects himself presently, *yet not I, but the Grace of God, which was with me*, 1 Cor. 15. 10. He was afraid of that little boasting Pronoun [I] and therefore retracts it, and strikes Sail to the Grace of Christ, God will resist, instead of helping us, if we steal his Crown, and put it on our own Heads. The Spirit will never agree to walk with us, if we take the uppermost Hand; and we shall lose the Benefit of his Holy Breathings, if we be puff'd up in our own Conceits. God will disable those from doing any thing praise-worthy, that give not him the Praise.

4. *The setting up of Duties in the room of Christ.* This we are exceeding apt to do; Disciples

ciples need to Learn that Lesson of being Converted, and becoming as little Children, *Mat.* 18. 3. It was very truly said by Mr. *Rutherford*, that Deadness to good and gracious Works, and lively Activity in the Performance of them seldom meet together; high Degrees of inherent Holiness, and a full devolving of the Soul upon Christ's imputed Righteousness rarely Kiss each other. 'Tis well, where they do, but 'tis a Provocation to God to abandon us, where they do not. If we would run in the way of God's Commandments, we must remember that *it is not of him that runneth*; if we would be assisted in the Duties of Obedience, we must bear it upon our Hearts, that we can never be entitled to Heaven by them. We forfeit the Spirit of Faith, if we imagine that Faith it self (the noblest of all Graces) does enrich us any otherwise, than as a Vessel which holds the Treasure; *Sicut olla pæcuniis referta hominem locupletat.* Calv.

5. *Spiritual Sloth is another Cause; in the disuse of Gifts, not exercising of Grace, and neglect of Duty.* This is the contrary extream to that Self-Confidence mention'd before, as that was a Conceit that we could do all Things in our own Strength, this is to sit still, and do nothing. We must stir up the Gift which is in us, if we would preserve it; God uses to help the Industrious, but he abhors the Sluggard. *Seneca*, a sober *Heathen*, calls Idleness the Grave of a Living Man. *Dr. Arrowsmith*, an Holy Divine, stiles it the Hell of a Living Christian. We hazard the taking away of our Talents, when we do not employ them. To let our Graces lye asleep, is not the way to nourish,

but to starve them. Many have almost lost the Spirit of Prayer, by the restraining of Prayer. *Arise, and be doing, and the Lord will be with thee,* 1 Chron. 22. 16. If we leave God to do all, God will leave us to our selves; if we fold out Hands together, we cannot expect that his should be stretcht out for our Assistance.

6. *Sleightness and Formality.* A sincere Believer, who is so in the Main, and Acts as such for the most Part, may yet sometimes imitate the Hypocrite too much, *i. e.* his Heart may be too little engag'd in approaching unto God. We too often pour out Words in Prayer without suitable Affections, too often attend on God's Word, without bending our Minds to it, or taking heed how we hear. Now by our resting so much in the outward Forms of Religion, we lose the Spirit of Power; by going in a Road of Duty, and performing this or that Act of Worship, because we are accustomed to do it, we put our selves out of the Way of Divine Influences. When we do not serve God with *our Spirits*, we may well expect to be depriv'd of *his Spirit*; when we do not seriously and earnestly pursue Communion with God in Duties, how can we expect to enjoy any? We put off God with a little bodily Exercise, God puts off us with a visible Church-Priviledge; we lift up our Hands in the Sanctuary, without our Souls, he lets us see nothing of his Power and Glory there.

7. *Worldliness and Carnality.* The minding of Earthly Things clips the Wings wherewith we should mount up towards Heaven. So far as we are joyned to such Idols, we may look to be separated from God; we open our Bosoms to
them,

them, and he hides his Face from us. Hence it is that that Condition of Life which does most please and gratifie the Flesh, does most expose to the withdrawals of the Spirit; because when our Portion of good Things in this Life, is very large, we are very prone to rejoyce inordinately in it; and when the World smiles much upon us, we commonly grow fond of the World. Therefore a low or afflicted State hath been oftner bless't with sweet incomes from Heaven, than the height of Prosperity, 2 Cor. 1. 5. *As the Sufferings of Christ abound in us; so our Consolation also aboundeth by Christ*, some have enjoy'd so much of God in Prisons (as that Martyr in Bonner's Coal-hole) that they have been unwilling to receive their Liberty. But 'tis very usual, that according to what Men gain in Temporals, they lose in Spirituals.

8. *Base and sinful Compliances for the avoiding of outward inconveniencie.* - This is as great an Offence to the Spirit of Christ, as Peter once was to Christ himself in a like Case. The affording of a Man's Presence at *false* Worship, may justly provoke God to deny his wonted Communications to us, when we are joyning in the *true*. If a Man partake of the Table of *Devils*, what Divine Fellowship can he look for at the Table of the *Lord*? The woful declinings of many Persons, who have been meerly led by Fear to Build up what they formerly destroy'd, have been too plain a Testimony to this Truth. *Sulpitius* (the Historian) who liv'd with St. *Martin*, tells us that after he had joyn'd in Communion with *Ithacius* the persecuting Bishop, through the Threatenings of the Emperor *Maximus*, there was a remarkable Suspension of those

those Influences and Graces for which he was eminent before. [Dr. B. Answer to Letter of the Ass, *Gen. p. 29.*] The best Way to retain the Spirit, is to retain our Integrity, whatever we hazard by it.

9. *Unbelieving Dejection wilfully indulg'd.* There is a saying of the Hebrew Doctors mentioned by *Drusius*, *Spiritus Sanctus non residet super hominem mœstum*; the Holy Spirit does not delight to dwell with one of a Sorrowful Spirit; and 'tis in great measure true. The Spirit of God is not a Spirit of heaviness, 'tis no Pleasure to him to see any of his Saints go mourning and bowed down, when their Hearts should rather be lifted up in the ways of God. *Nehemiah* was sore afraid when the King took Notice of the sadness of his Countenance, *Chap. 2. 2.* And *Mordecai* would not enter the Court-gates with his Sackcloth on, *Esth. 4. 2.* An Holy Joyful Frame, and Garments of Praise are always comely for Upright ones, and most acceptable unto God. As *David's* Musick drove away the Evil Spirit that troubled *Saul*, so Christian Alacrity (not vain and foolish Levity) is a means of having the good Spirit to abide with us. Hardening our selves in Sorrow is giving Way to Unbelief, the Sin of which he especially reproves.

SERMON X.

April 7. 1696.

JUDGES XVI. xx. last Clause.

And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him.

10. **R** *Ejecting the Present Motions of the Spirit, which ought to be instantly embrac'd and followed.* All the Spirits Motions are seasonable, and therefore not to be put off; for Delay is a kind of denial, and favours of such ungrateful Contempt, as must needs be very displeasing to him. When thou saidst, *Seek ye my Face, my Heart said unto thee, thy Face will I seek*, Psalm 27. 8. God does not only expect such an Answer, but expects it immediately upon his Call. When ever he blows with his Wind, he looks that we should spread our Sails. If we refuse his offer'd help, we may deservedly want it when desir'd. As Christ withdrew himself from the Spouse, because she let him stand knocking so long at the Door of her Heart, and she still deferr'd to open, and tir'd out his loving Forbearance with vain and frivolous Excuses, Song 5. 2, &c. But as we must not omit the present Per-

Performance of any Duty which he excites unto, we must not check his Influences by being weary of the Duties which he assists us in: If we do not improve extraordinary Aids by holding out the longer, we provoke him to depart.

11. *Dallying with Satan's Temptations.* This was *Sampson's* Case, he went on Mocking *Dalilah* three Times one after another, till at last he told her all his Heart. So *Eve's* parleying with the Serpent, instead of giving a *resolute Repulse*, was the Introduction to all that Sin and Misery, which hath since fill'd the World. There can be no Conversation had with the *Unclean Spirit*, but that the *Holy Spirit* will be offended by it. An intimate Friend would take it ill, and would have Reason to keep at a more than usual distance from us, if he saw us maintaining any familiar Correspondence with his avowed Enemy. If we grow bold and presumptuous in playing with the Devils baits, the Spirit of God will be more shy of having Fellowship with us. If we do not vigorously oppose the first Suggestions and Assaults, we can have little Hope of being assisted in the progress of Temptation, and much less of coming off with Victory at the End of it. He that will tread upon the Edge of a known Snare, which he should fly from, is generally left to be caught and taken in it.

12. *Carelessness and Negligence in our daily Walk.* This may be, and is too often the fault of those, whose Hearts nevertheless in the main are upright with God. The Fear of God is in them, but 'tis not constantly before them, as it ought to be. Though they be not habitual, Customary Sinners, yet for want of taking that heed

heed to their Ways which they should do, they may fall into scandalous and hainous Sins; and what less can we suppose that this should issue in, than a Departure of the Spirit of God from them? And therefore when *David* came to himself, after his foul Miscarriage, and reflected upon what he had done, he might well put up such a Prayer, *Psalms 51. 11. Cast me not away from thy Presence, take not thy Holy Spirit from me.* This was what he dreaded and deprecated, as the just and natural Consequent of his Sin. He that would not expose himself to such a Judgment as this is, needs to be very watchful and Circumspect; for if we do not *ponder the Path of our Feet*, and look well to our goings, we shall slip into the Mire, before we are aware.

III. What are the Effects which follow upon these Departures?

1. *A manifest deadness both in Private Duties and Publick Ordinances.* 'Tis said of the slain Witnesses, that when the Spirit of Life from God enter'd into them, *They stood upon their Feet*, *Rev. 11. 11.* When the Spirit withdraws, we can by no means lift up our selves, but only creep as it were, and grovel on the ground. 'Tis so

1. *In Private Duties*; the Ebbings and Flowings which we often find in the Exercise of Grace, the *various and unequal Motions* of our Souls towards God, when we are alone, in our Retirements, plainly prove that the Spirit of God is not always alike present, and that according as he is more or less so, we are either lively or drooping. When the Spirit is in the
Wheels,

Wheels, we are able to run, but if not, we tire. When we have him with us, we go on *swiftly*, when we are without him, we draw very *heavily*. When God pours out his Spirit upon us, how fervently can we pour out our Souls to him? When he is departed, how strangely are we bound up? The Influence of the Spirit sets us on Fire, and in his Absence we can get no warmth.

2. *'Tis the same in Publick Ordinances.* When God fills them with his own Presence, there is a mighty Power, a glorious Majesty, a charming Beauty, a satisfying Sweetness in them; but when God withholds himself, they are empty of all this. When the Spirit of God moves upon the Waters of the Sanctuary, they are a Stream that *make glad the City of God*; but else, even the Children of *Sion* have no Refreshment by them. Hence it is that the very same Persons are so differently affected with, and wrought upon by the same Administrations at several Seasons; sometimes it may be, we meet with that ravishing Pleasure and Joy in Worshipping Assemblies, that we are ready to cry, *it is good to be here*, at other Times we feel no such Thing. When we are in the Spirit on the Lord's-Day, *the Sabbath is our Delight, the Word is savoury Meat, the Supper is a Feast of Fat Things*; but without the Spirit, *these Days of Heaven are lost to us, and the Wells of Salvation like dry Pits*.

2. *A wretched indifferency towards the Service of God.* As this is an Effect of God's departing, so it naturally follows upon the former; for where Men are not quicken'd in God's way, they will certainly need to be quicken'd to it.

When

When the vigorous Relish of the Soul is gone, the Appetite will be gone proportionably. Our desiring of the Word depends very much upon our *Tasting* of it, 1 *Pet.* 2. 2, 3. The better Meals we make in God's House, the more we hunger; and the more we drink of the River of his Pleasure, the greater is our Thirst. Here lies our Misery therefore, when through the Absence of the Spirit God's Service is become undelightful to us, 'tis also too much undesir'd by us. Some desire to his Name is still remaining in every gracious Soul, but 'tis marvelously cooled and abated, and the edge of it taken off; there is not that vehement Desire, which the Scripture speaks of, 2 *Cor.* 7. 11. There is not a *desiring with Desire*; as *Luke* 22. 15. There is not that *Panting after God*, nor that *earnest longing to come, and appear before him*, which *David* professes, *Psalms* 42. 1, 2. They can pass over Seasons of conversing with God, or be hinder'd of them, more easily than when the Spirit is present.

3. *The Revival of secret Corruptions, whereby Satan gets great Advantages.* The Evil present with us, is never so prevalent, as when the Lord is departed from us. Then those Lusts which seem'd to be pretty well mortified and subdued before, start up again, and recover their Strength, and the Devil falling in with them, does abundance of mischief. Believers are here-upon sometimes overcome by Temptations, which they Thought themselves most secure against, and furthest off from a Compliance with; they are led to commit the very Sins which they had the greatest Aversion to and Abhorrence of. Satan and indwelling Sin together do not make up
so

so great a Force, but that we may withstand and repel them, when we have the Presence of the Spirit of God; but when we are bereaved of that Presence, we are too weak to grapple with them asunder. Therefore the first Rule in the spiritual Warfare is, *be strong in the Lord*, Eph. 6. 10. 'Tis not to be believed, what an Head Corruption will get, and what inroads the Devil will make, when a Saint is left but a little to himself. One Temptation is admitted after another, with very faint and fruitless Reluctancy; like *Jerusalem That open'd her Feet to every one*, &c. Ezek. 16. 25.

4. *Impenitency for a Time under the guilt of Sin committed.* There are several Causes of sinful hardness, and among the rest, we find it sometimes in Scripture attributed to God; which cannot be understood, as if he were in any Sense the Author of it, or the Agent in it, so as to produce it by positive Influence, but chiefly by Way of Privation, *viz.* by removing of the Spirit from us, whose proper work it is to soften, to make our Hearts tender, and bring us to Repentance. Hence it is that the very Children of God, such as can boldly say, *doubtless thou art our Father*, do not only err from God's ways, but (which is more) are *hasten'd from his Fear*, Isa. 63. 16, 17. They may not only commit Sin, but continue in it a great while, when the Case is so with them. 'Tis astonishing that *David* should remain without Repentance so many Months as he did; we cannot imagine but that he often heard and read the sixth and seventh Commandments in that Time, both in his own House and in the Temple, and yet Conscience lay asleep still, till the Spirit of God by
Nathan

Nathan awaken'd him again. His *Reproofs of Sin* are the only *Effectual Ones*; for while he is silent, all other *smittings* will signifie little to sound *Conviction*.

5. *Impatience or Despondency, even under light Afflictions.* Fretting or Fainting in a *Day of Adversity*, are the natural Issues of our own *Spirit*, when they are not calm or comforted by *God's*.

1. *We cannot possess our Souls in Patience under Suffering, when the Spirit leaves us.* There is need of *strengthening with all might, according to his glorious Power, unto all Patience, &c.* Col. 1.11. There is a *natural Frowardness* of Heart which all *afflictive Evils* tend to *Kindle and Provoke*, which we are no more able of our selves to *Conquer*, than we are to rule the *Raging of the Sea*. The same *God* that lays his *Hand* at any *Time* upon us, must also by his own *Grace* humble us under it, and reconcile us to it, or else our *rebellious Passion* will *struggle and contend* against it. *Jonah's* extravagant *Anger* for a *Gourd*, and justifying of *himself*, shews how *ungovernable* we are, when *forsaken of God*, *Jonah* 4. 9.

2. *We cannot rejoyce in Hope under any Suffering, when the Spirit is with-drawn.* We are ready to sink immediately, when our *Support* is taken away; our feeble *Knees* (like *Belshazzar's*) are apt to *smite* one against another, and we cannot bare any *Burden* alone. *Carnal Fear* swallows up the *Soul*, our *Hearts* fail us, and we are as they that have no more *Spirit* in them, when we have lost *God's encouraging Presence*. *God's help* is as necessary against *Despair* in *Trouble*, as for *Deliverance* out of it. He that believes to see the *goodness of the Lord*, when he is feeling

his Severity, must be under the Influence of the Spirit of Faith.

6. *Shameful Denials of God's Name, in perilous Times, when we are called to hold it fast, and to make an open Profession of it.* Courage and Resolution, Constancy and Stedfastness in appearing for the Cause and Interest of Christ at all Times, is an eminent Fruit of the Spirit; and therefore Believers were not so frequently, nor in such large numbers, call'd to suffer for God under the Old Testament as now under the New. When there is a more plentiful Effusion of the Spirit, than there was before. And therefore the Apostles were commanded to tarry at Jerusalem, and not to Launch into a Sea of Persecution, by going about to Preach the Gospel, till the Spirit was given, which Christ expresses by their being *endued with Power from on high*, Luke 24. 49. What a miserable Coward was Peter before this, that had not the Confidence to own his Master, when only challeng'd by two of the Maids of the High-Priest, Mark 14. 66, &c. And yet how undaunted after this, in his Acknowledgment of him to the Rulers of the People, and Elders of Israel? Acts 4. 10, 11. When the Disciples were fill'd with the Holy Ghost, they *spake the Word of God with boldness*, ver. 31. But how easily will Men's furious Threatenings scare us, when our God abandons us.

7. *Woful Confusion and Disorder in the Exercise of our Thoughts, and workings of our Affections.*

1. *In the Exercise of our Thoughts.* A Man's Thoughts are naturally quick and nimble, and therefore the more apt of themselves to be hurried and confounded, as we know that the
swift-

swiftest Motions are perplext the soonest. When *Cain* went out from the Presence of the Lord, he became a Fugitive and a Vagabond; so the Mind is full of wild and loose, incoherent, distracted, vain Imaginations, that serve to no use, that will be kept in no Order, when 'tis not under the actual Conduct of the Spirit of God; it royes and wanders from one thing to another and can fix or settle no where, as it should. There are swarms of bad Thoughts which thrust out the good ones; and we can no more meditate to any Purpose upon spiritual Objects without the Spirit, than a Man can take the Prospect of a Star through a Glass held with a shaking Hand.

2. In the working of our Affections; these are as hard to be regulated, as our Thought are to be compos'd. They will boyl over, when they should be kept in, and when they ought to flow out, then there will be none stirring. The best of our Hearts, if they be not under better Management than our own, will be hot and cold by fits, at the contrary Seasons. Upon slight occasions, we know not how to restrain them, and upon great occasions, we know not how to excite them. This is and will be the Case, whenever God suspends his own gracious Acts, and stands at a distance from us.

8. Unwilling and sad Expectation of Death and Judgment. 'Tis impossible for a Child of God, chearfully to lay down his Temporal Life, and lay hold of Eternal, unless God be with him, Psal. 23. 4. Though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no Evil, for thou art with me, &c. How dismal must it be, to think of going to a departed God? Of standing at his

Bar, when we apprehend our selves cast out of his sight! How can we be persuaded of his receiving us in the next World, when we are *Fearful* of his rejecting us in this? Who can look into *Eternity* without Horrour, that now looks upon *God* as one *afar off*? Though the *Passage* be safe, it will be unavoidably *Dark* and *Stormy*; though the *Victory* be certain, yet the *Conflict* will be sharp and grievous. The last *Enemy* will terrifie, though it cannot hurt, and the *Serpent* will hiss, though it cannot sting. The *deserted Believer* enters into *Peace*, when he *Dyes*, but he goes out of the World with much *Disturbance*. He is in *Bondage*, as to his *Frame*, though at *Liberty* as to his *State*? he stands trembling on the *Brink of the Grave*, because not upheld with *God's Free Spirit*, Psalm 51. 12.

IV. *How far may Believers be insensible of those Departings?*

1. *They may not be instantly sensible of them; they may not perceive God to be departed, as soon as he is so, they may conclude him to be still present, when he is not.* We are not only incident to such mistakes, but 'tis possible to persist in them for a while; and this is permitted by *God*, though he does not give us up to such strong, nor to such lasting *Delusions*, as other Men. A Man in a swooning fit, does not miss the Things which are taken from him, just at that Moment, when they are taken, but afterwards he recollects what he had, and considers what is wanting. So 'tis here, at the very Time of *God's Departure*, we may still *Fancy* that all Things continue as they were, but after he hath been some time departed, we shall discern a notorious *Change*.

2. *They*

2. *They may not be thoroughly sensible of them for a much longer Time.* When the Soul is in a drowsie Frame, though it begins to be alarmed, there is however some distance of Time, before it can shake off its slumbers, and perfectly open its Eyes. *Spiritual Distempers* creep upon Believers by Degrees. and so they go off again by Degrees also; they neither seize, nor leave us, all at once; but 'tis most unquestionably true, that they are sooner Contracted than Cur'd, for the most Part. 'Tis an easier Matter to stupify than it is to rouse us. A Saint may first be convinc'd by the Effects that God is departed, and yet some time may pass, before he is duely humbled for the Causes of that Departure; he may see in some measure what his Condition is, a great while, ere he seriously Reflects, how he came into it.

3. *The Sense of God's departings may not abide so long upon them, as it should do.* As it may need to be increas't after 'tis wrought, so it may need to be renew'd. We are too prone to wear out Impressions of this Kind, and to forget what we have felt. This is contrary to what God expects from us; the Church did not quickly lose the Taste of her Wormwood and Gall, but cries out, *My Soul hath them still in Remembrance*, Lam. 3. 19, 20. God's joyful returns are not to deface the Memory of his mournful Departures. 'Tis good to call to mind what is past, that we may the better enjoy, and value and improve the Present. When the doleful sorrow of God's Absence is gone, there is a becoming Sense of it to be still preserv'd and retain'd.

V. *How is it that Believers come to be so insensible of these Things?*

1. *That which they are insensible of, is some Reason of their insensibility.* When God departs, it is not to be suppos'd that our *spiritual Senses* should be so *vigorously Exercis'd* as at other Times. We know, when our *natural Spirits* are obstructed and retire, *bodily Sense* is taken away by it; so in this Case, when the *Spirit of God* hath left us, there is more than *ordinary dulness* and *benumbedness* which by that means seizes upon us. The Soul is therefore unapprehensive of *God's forsakings*, because *God hath forsaken it*; and 'tis a token for good, that he is about *returning*, when the Soul begins its *enquiries* after him.

2. *The Devil is very busie in contriving Diversions for us at such Times, or in making us think that we are well enough, though we should never be better than we are.* Satan hath a great many *De-vices* to keep us from attending to the *Dispensations* under which we are, or else to *misrepresent* our Condition to us. When a *Believer* is in his *best Estate*, then his Work is to *accuse* and *disquiet*; when a *Believer* is at his worst, then he labours to *Flatter* and *Deceive*. When *God testifies* his Love to us, then he is *suggesting Wrath*; when *God is angry*, he speaks nothing but *Peace*.

3. *Believers themselves are oftentimes too much wanting in the careful Examination of their own State; and so there happen sad Alterations, and they know them not.* We are ready to trust too much to former *Trials*, whereas we should be frequently *communing* with our own *Hearts*, in order to a *farther search*. It ought to be part of our *daily Exercise*, that we may see what ground we get or lose. *Reviews of our spiritual Condi-*

Condition can never be *superfluous*; but neglect of it may be very *dangerous*; for so it is, that many are brought *extreamly low*, before they are *aware*.

VI. Use.

I. Information.

1. The Presence of the Blessed God is the spring of a Creatures Blessedness in both Worlds. When John is describing the Happy State of the Church in Heaven, or the happiest State of the Church on Earth, he expresses it by this; God himself shall be with them, and be their God, Rev. 21, 3. If we have God with us, we cannot be miserable, if we have him not, we must of Necessity be so. 'Tis an Heaven upon Earth to enjoy him, an Hell upon Earth to want him.

2. How great is their Misery, whom God is at an Eternal distance from? The Spirit comes and strives for a Time with many, upon whom he never rests; and when he once goes away, he does not so much as strive more. And then, where no Fruit grew before, there can no Fruit grow hereafter; the Earth must always be as Iron, when the Heaven over it is as Brass. When the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, he came not again, but an Evil Spirit in his Place, 1 Sam. 16. 14.

3. The new Creature is no more able to sustain it self, than the old Man to transform himself. He restoreth my Soul, he leadeth me, &c. Psalm 23. 3. Restoring and Leading are both the Acts of God. Believers are not like Engines which the Artificer sets a moving, and then they are left to go by themselves. All that God hath done for us in Conversion, will be undone by us, if he do not

continue doing. He that first makes the difference between us and others, must keep it up to the last.

4. God hath other ways to visit the Sins of his own Children, than by Everlasting Destruction. This is that Wrath of God which comes upon the Children of Disobedience, Eph. 5.6. But there are milder Effects of fatherly Displeasure, for his offending Sons and Daughters. Instead of depriving them of their Inheritance in Glory (which is infallibly secur'd) he suspends the influences of his Grace; instead of casting them into outer Darkness hereafter, he hides himself from them now, so that they can see no good, till the Veil is rent again; and this is dismal enough.

II. Exhortation.

1. To those that are in Sampson's Case, from whom the Lord is departed.

1. Put your Mouths in the Dust, and acknowledge the Righteousness of God in this Dispensation. Let thy Conscience give an impartial Answer to that Challenge. Hast thou not procured this unto thy self, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, &c? Jer. 2. 17. We are first in forsaking, God is first in returning. The Lord is with us, while we are with him, 2 Chron. 15. 2. We wickedly depart from him, and then he justly departs from us; as Adam hid himself from the Presence of the Lord, before he was driven out.

2. Own the goodness of God to you, even while he is dealing thus bitterly with you.

1. Own his Goodness in giving you a Sense of your Condition. How much worse would your Case be, if you were left to be past feeling, or did not apprehend how your Case is.

2. Own

2. Own his Goodness that you are yet alive, and have a space and season allow'd you of returning to God. It was a Mercy to Samson, that the Philistines did not kill him as soon as they seiz'd him, but that he had an Opportunity for Repentance.

3. Own his Goodness, if he fetch you home by Temporal Severities, and so produce in you a speedier and livelier Sense of your spiritual State. Thus Sampson was sorely afflicted, and the Image of his Guilt plainly stamp'd upon his Punishment. Gaza was the Place of his Suffering, as it had been of his Sin, *ver. 1. with 21.* He that made himself a Slave to an Harlot, was made to grind in a Mill, and his Eyes that were the Windows of his Lust, were put out, that he might see his Sin and Misery the better.

3. Continue in Prayer, and all other Duties, how long soever this Dispensation should last.

1. In Prayer; though God seems to fly from you, do you pursue him with greater Importunity. Never give over seeking till you find; be much upon your Knees, till you feel your selves upon the wing. Though I would not advise to affected length in any one particular Address to God, when Life and Fervour is wanting, yet 'tis good to try him by often repeated Approaches, for what we fail of at one Time, we may meet with at another.

2. In all other Duties, which are like Plowing and Sowing, that must be minded, if we desire any Fruit, though at present we have neither Sun nor Rain. Wait for the Promise of the Holy Ghost in his own Way; and do not think to receive him by running farther into Sin. Omissions of Duty are not likely means of spiritual Recovery. When God had in part forsaken David, he still resolv'd

solv'd to follow him in a course of Obedience, Psalm 119. 8. We must look to our Work, tho' we have small Supplies of Strength.

4. Be as far from casting away your Confidence, as from slackening your Diligence. God doth Devise Means, that his banished be not quite or for ever expelled from him, 2 Sam. 14. 14. When Sampson was brought forth to make Sport for Three Thousand Philistines, he calls to God to remember and strengthen him yet again, that he might be aveng'd upon his Enemies; and God heard and answered him, Ver. 28. Look to Christ by Faith, as forsaken of God for a Time. Eye him as the scape Goat that was carried into the solitary Wilderness of Divine Desertion for our sakes; yet he came out again and triumphed gloriously.

2. To those from whom God is not departed.

1. Do not despise; but pity those who are bereaved of that Presence which you enjoy. They may not be greater Sinners, though you are greater Favourites.

2. Keep a watchful account of the gradual Accesses and Recesses of the Spirit of God. Take notice of the Times of his stay with you, and the intervals of his Separation from you.

3. Do not make Light of the least withdrawing, nor sit contented under it; for it is truly deplorable, and will let in greater Evils upon you, if not prevented. When it appears to you, as if he were about to depart, block up his way, by throwing your selves at his feet; when he begins to stir, take hold of him; as the Disciples constrained Christ to tarry with them, when he made as though he would have gone further, Luke 24. 28, 29.

4. Labour to be filled with all the fulness of God,
Eph.

Eph. 3. 19. This is the way to *preserve you from his departings*: The more you have of *his presence*, the less danger you are in of losing it. To be always breathing after an increased *fellowship of the Spirit*, is the way not to be *depriv'd* of what we possess already.

S E R.

SERMON XI.

June 16. 1696.

ACTS V. xxxii. latter Part.

*And so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God
hath given to them that obey him.*

THE Infinitely wise God knows very well how to serve his own Interests and Ends, both by acts of Judgment and Mercy. *Ananias* and *Saphira* are suddenly *struck dead* at the beginning of this Chapter; and on the contrary, many sick are healed in the following part of this Chapter; both are over-rul'd in an eminent manner for the propagation of the Gospel in those early New Testament times. This so enrag'd the High-Priest and his Party among the *Jews*, that they seize and imprison the Apostles, *v. 17, 18.* But the very next Night an Angel is sent to open the Prison-Doors, and set them at Liberty, and commands them to go and Preach in the Temple, which they did accordingly betimes in the Morning, *v. 19, 20, 21.* Their Enemies being amaz'd at this Deliverance, and afraid of a Tumult among the People, bring them with-
out

out violence, before the Council, who charge them with Stubbornness and Sedition for persisting in the exercise of their Ministry, after they had forbidden them, *ver. 29.* Hereupon Peter in the Name of the Rest, makes a noble and courageous Defence. He tells them, that what they did, was to avoid the guilt of Disobedience to God, whose Authority is greater than Mans; *ver. 29.* And that the same Jesus, whom they had Crucified, God had raised, and exalted to be a Prince and Saviour, to give Repentance, and Remissions of Sins, *ver. 30, 31.* This was the summ of what Christ himself had order'd to be Publisht in his Name, and these were the Things which they were Commissioned to Testifie; *Luke 24. 47, 48.* Therefore he adds in the Text, [*And we are the Witnesses of these Things,*] The spreading of this Doctrine in the World, was a trust which they had receiv'd, and they dared not to be silent; their Lord had expressly said, *Ye shall be Witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, &c. Chap. 1. 8.* And no Prohibitions or Threatenings must stop their Mouths, or tempt them to neglect their Duty. But this is not all; that which follows in the last Clause of the Verse, is yet more considerable; [*And so is also the Holy Ghost whom God hath given to them that obey him,*] *q. d.* Though you quarrel with us, and oppose our Testimony, there is a witness above all Exception, who may not only silence, but Cure your Infidelity; we are not alone in this Work, we have one to back us, who is greater than all, even the Spirit of God himself. This agrees with what Christ had said, *John 15. 26, 27.* When the Comforter is come ——— he shall testifie of

of me; and ye also shall bear witness ———

The Words are the Conclusion of *Peter's* Reply to the *Jewish Sanhedrim*, in which we have a brief Abridgement of his Sermon, or larger Discourse, upon the Day of Pentecost, though that and this had very different Effects; *they who heard that, were pricked to the Heart*, and it issued in their saving Conversion, *Chap. 2. 37. They who heard this, were cut to the Heart*, and consulted about slaying the Apostles, *ver. 33. of this Chapter.* The same Expression is us'd concerning *Stephen's* Murderers, *Chap. 7. 54.* And signifies the galling of their Consciences; Which provoke them to a more furious Resistance of the Truth, when they have been persuaded to embrace it. Thus, that very Word (in substance the same) which is the savour of Life unto one, becomes the savour of Death unto another.

Obf. *The Holy Spirit whom God hath given to them that obey him, is a Witness to Jesus Christ.* The Text is not a direct Assertion of the Doctrine of the Trinity, but we have here all the Three Divine Persons brought in and mentioned together. Our Lord Christ is the Person witness'd to, the Holy Ghost is the Person witnessing, and God the Father is the Person whom this Witness proceeds from, and is sent by. *These are the Three that are said to bear Record (or witness) in Heaven,* 1 John 5. 7. And indeed they all Testifie to each other. *The Father bore Witness of Christ,* John 5. 37. Christ also was given to be a Witness to him, *Isa. 55. 4.* And in this Place, the Holy Ghost is named

as

as a Witness to Christ. In handling this,

I. Shew in what Sense the Holy Spirit is given.

II. Whom he is given to.

III. How he performs the Work and Office of a Witness to our Lord Jesus.

IV. Use.

I. *In what Sense is the Holy Spirit given by God?* In many Places, which 'tis needless to repeat, the same Phrase occurs to us, especially in the New Testament. To prevent misunderstanding, in so fundamental a Point, I shall endeavour (with an humble regard to the greatness of the Mystery) to open it Negatively and Positively.

1. *Negatively.* *The giving of the Spirit by God the Father, does not import the Spirits being Inferiour to the Father, nor does it exclude the Purchase and Gift of Christ.*

1. *This does not import the Spirit's being Inferiour to the Father.* How difficult soever it be to conceive the Order which is among the Persons in the Godhead, we are sure, 'tis impossible that there should be any inequality. The Blessed Spirit is one with the Father, and to him belong all the glorious Perfections of the Supream Being; he is the most High God, as the Father is. All the Three Persons have the same Infinite Essence, and Nature, the same Understanding, Will, and boundless Power. If any one Person be put beneath another, his Deity is thereby destroy'd; and therefore, we must take heed of any such unscriptural

Scriptural Imagination concerning the Spirit of God. The Holy Ghost is given indeed, but not as by a Superiour, who hath a command over another, whether he will or not; for he is given with his own Consent; and one equal may give another, if they agree to do so; as in like manner Jesus Christ, whom the Scripture calls *God's Fellow*, is also said to be *given of God*.

2. *This does not exclude either the Purchase, or the Gift of Christ.* The Holy Spirit is given by the Father, and yet Purchased and given by the Son too.

1. *Purchased by Christ, the Son of God.* He hath obtained the Spirit for us, or else we should never have partaken of him. Hence it is that he is said to be *shed on us through Jesus Christ our Saviour*, Tit. 3. 5, 6. His Blood was the Price of this Priviledge, his Intercession procures our actual Enjoyment of it. *John 14. 16. I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, &c.* After the finishing of his Work on Earth, and Exaltation to Glory, the Apostle tells us, *That he receiv'd of the Father the Promise of the Holy Ghost*, Acts 2. 33. The Promise of the Holy Ghost, here is put for the Holy Ghost promised; to speak strictly, Christ receiv'd the Promise of the Holy Ghost, in the Everlasting Covenant of Redemption, upon such and such Conditions which he was to perform in the fulness of Time; but now, those Conditions being perform'd, he receiv'd an abundant Accomplishment of this Promise, not for himself, but for those that belong to him.

2. *The Spirit is given by Christ.* He is said to shed him forth; in the last cited Place. So he

he engag'd to send him, *John* 15. 26. *Chap.* 16. 7. The same Act may very well be attributed both to the Father, and Son, as concurring in external Operations. *My Father worketh hitherto, and I work*, *Chap.* 5. 17. The Father is represented as the Maker of all Things, very frequently, and so is the Son; *In the Beginning God Created the Heaven and the Earth*, and in that beginning Jesus Christ was with God, not as an unactive Spectator, but as a Co-worker. Believers are sanctified by God the Father, *Jude* 1. *And they are also sanctified in (or by) Christ Jesus*, *1 Cor.* 1. 2. The Greek Particle is the same in both Places; *ἐν Χριστῷ*, and *ἐν Θεῷ*. Therefore 'tis manifest that the giving of the Holy Ghost by God the Father, is not at all inconsistent with the dispensing of the same Gift by our Lord Christ.

2. *Positively*. There are Four Things which seem to be signified to us, by the Father's giving of the Holy Ghost.

1. *That the Grace and Love of the Father, is the spring of all Divine Communications*. Here is the first Rise and Original of all the good that we receive; 'tis all resolv'd into the Father's good Pleasure, as the Primary moving Cause. *John* 3. 16. *God so loved the World that he gave his only begotten Son, &c.* 'Tis from the same Fountain of Eternal Love in the Bosom of God the Father, that this Gift of the Holy Ghost does issue also. 'Tis very remarkable therefore that our Lord directs the Faith of his Disciples to fasten chiefly hereupon, *Chap.* 15. 26, 27. *I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father himself loveth you.* The meaning is not that Christ would omit to mediate for

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them,

them, or that his Mediation was not to be eyed by them, but the meaning is, that the Father's Love, does prevent as it were, this Act of Christ, and is the very ground which 'tis built upon; for Christ had never been appointed to this work, if God had not lov'd us.

2. *That the Communication of the Spirit is altogether free and undeserv'd.* He is truly given; and whatsoever is proper Gift, is not bestowed as a recompence to any previous Endeavours; but in a way of most gracious voluntary Disposal; it might be withheld, denied and kept back, without the least shadow of unrighteousness or wrong to the Creature. God is under no Obligation to give the Spirit to any, but what by his own Promise he hath laid upon himself; and there is no Promise, but what *Mercy* is as much concern'd in the making, as *Truth* in the keeping of. God hath promised to give the Spirit to them that ask him, and for our Encouragement, he is describ'd as more willing to give the Spirit upon our asking, than the tenderest Parents are to give necessary Sustenance to their own Children, Luke 11. 13. But is this ever the less an Act of Grace, because we are put to beg it? And is not our very begging an effect of Grace receiv'd? For we cannot ask the Spirit, without the Spirit; the Spirit of Supplication is poured out, where Pleaded for.

3. *That when the Spirit of God is once communicated, he is never totally recall'd.* God does not take away what he gives, of this sort. *His saving Gifts* (as the Gift of the Holy Ghost most certainly is) are without Repentance, Rom. 11. 29. In them is Continuance; (as the Prophet speaks, Isa. 64. 5.) Their Duration runs Parallel with the

the being of the Giver. They that are really made partakers of the Holy Ghost, in his special sanctifying Operations cannot lose him. He is given to *abide with them for ever*; they are his *Living Temples*, which shall be at no Time forsaken, or left desolate. There may be transient workings, and long strivings of the Spirit, with carnal Hypocrites, but they are not indeed possessors of him, and therefore are finally without him. There was a notable Difference between the Anointing of *Saul* and *David*; the former with a Vial, 1 *Sam.* 10. 1. The latter with an *Horn of Oil*, Chap. 16. 1. God's Ceremonies are very significant; the Horn was a more solid, the Glass a more brittle Substance, to intimate the permanency of the Divine Presence with *David*, and its sudden removal from *Saul*.

4. *That the Communication of the Spirit is an exceeding valuable Blessing.* When God is said to give the Holy Ghost, it implies the Privilege of those that receive him. 'Tis an instance of singular Favour on God's Part, and a Matter of unspeakable Advantage on their Part, both to themselves and others.

1. *'Tis the greatest Advantage to themselves.* There are many good and perfect Gifts of God, but this Gift excels. The Promise of Christ in the Old Testament, and of the Spirit in the New, contain all the Promises in Eminency. There are some Things which God gives in Anger, but he never gives the Spirit so. There are some Things which God distributes promiscuously, and some times, to those whom he hates, most plentifully; but the Spirit is a Gift which the World cannot receive, John 14. 17.

Other Things may be the lot of such as are reserved to the *Day of Destruction*, but they that have the Spirit are sealed to the *Day of Redemption*.

2. 'Tis a great Advantage to others also, 1 Cor. 12. 7. *The Manifestation of the Spirit is given to every Man to profit withal.* No Persons in the World so useful in their Places, as they that partake of this blessed Gift. It was this which recommended Joseph to the Egyptians, Gen. 41. 38. *Pharaoh said unto his Servants, can we find such an one as this, a Man in whom the Spirit of God is?* One fill'd with the Holy Ghost is worth a Thousand of common Men; he is a capable Instrument of much more good in his Generation, than all the Philosophers, Criticks, and Disputers of this World with their vast stores of un sanctified Learning.

II. *Whom is this Spirit given to?* The Answer is in the Text, *to them that obey him.* For the clearing of this, there are Three Things, which should be a little enquir'd into; Who is the Person here said to be obey'd? What is meant by our obeying him? And how we are to understand the Spirits being given unto such?

1. *Who is the Person here said to be obey'd?* [To them that obey him,] αὐτῷ. 'Tis indeed applicable to all the Three Persons; Father, Son, and Spirit, as they are all the just Objects of our Obedience, God the Father is to be obey'd in the Commands which he gives forth, God the Holy Ghost is to be obey'd in his inward Motions upon our own Hearts; but I incline rather to their Judgment who Interpret this especially of God the Son, Jesus Christ, This seems the fairest

fairest Construction, if we view the Words in the Original, we are his *Witnesses*, *αὐτῶν*. i. e. Christ's Witnesses. Christ is the Person spoken of first and last; the Verse begins and closes with him. Now that Christ hath a right to our Obedience, is undeniable.

1. *Because we were made by him; and as his Creatures, we are bound to be his Servants.* He that brought us into *Being*, may upon that Account require the utmost Performance of *Duty* from us.

2. *As he is our Redeemer, he is entitled to be our Ruler.* He may very well give Laws to us, that hath restor'd our Lives to us; as the impotent Man urg'd to the Jews, when they censur'd him for carrying his Bed on the Sabbath-day; *John 5. 11.* *He that made me whole, the same said unto me, take up thy Bed and Walk,* q. d. it becomes me to follow his Orders, to whom I owe my Recovery. Christ is *Saviour* and *Lord* to the same Persons; and all that are ransom'd by him, are thereby engag'd to be subject to him.

2. *What is meant by obeying him here?* Some render it by Believing; and that this must be included (if it be not principally intended) I would offer these few Arguments to prove.

1. *Faith it self is the highest Act of Obedience.* We read of the *Obedience of Faith*, *Rom. 16. 26.* As the great End of the Gospels Publication; and the very same Words are render'd *Obedience to the Faith*, *Chap. 1. 5.* If we should take Faith here for the *Doctrine of Faith*, 'tis evident that the receiving of this Doctrine is set forth by Obedience. *In believing we obey; for this is his Commandment, that we should Believe,* &c. *1 John 3. 23.* Indeed 'tis the most difficult

Duty, as they that are found in the Performance of it, are able to declare from their own Experience. Presumption is easie, but the true Exercise of Faith is hard Work.

2. *Faith is the Foundation of all Evangelical Obedience.* Obedience is that which inseparably results from it, but can never be presupposed to it. By Faith, Abraham, obeyed, when he was called to go out of his own Countrey into a strange Land, Heb. 11. 8. And whoever obey from any other Principle, they are nothing in God's Account, and all that they do, will avail nothing to them. Receiving of Christ is the first Act, and yielding our selves to him, is consequent upon it.

3. *We are expressly said to receive the Promise of the Spirit through Faith,* Gal. 3. 14. *Did not receive,* and Faith is oppos'd to Works, twice in this very Case of receiving the Spirit, ver. 2, 5. And therefore the Gospel, which is the Doctrine of Faith, as distinguish'd from the Law, which is the Rule of Works, is stiled the *Ministration of the Spirit*, 2 Cor. 3. 8. A Road of doing, separate from believing, is not the Way of the Spirit of God.

3. *How are we to understand, the giving of the Spirit to them that obey Christ?*

1. *It must not be understood, as if this were the Reason of the Gift, or the actual Qualification of the Persons before the receiving of this Gift.* Our foreseen Faith and Obedience is not the Reason why God gives the Holy Ghost to us; for he is given freely (as hath been said) from no other Motive, but the meer Kindness and Goodwill of God to lost and undone Sinners. Nor are any Persons so qualified and prepar'd for the receiving

receiving of the Spirit, before he is given to them; for we are *unbelieving and disobedient*, till the Spirit hath been mightily at Work in us. The whole Race of Mankind, are by Nature a wretched Company of Infidels, and Rebels against Christ, without the Spirit. And there is not the least Disposition in us to any Duty whatsoever, but what is of his producing.

2. *Believing and Obeying are the present Effects of the Spirit's Influence upon our Souls, as soon as he is given us.* He is given in Order to this End, and this End is immediately and infallibly brought about by his *powerful Agency*. When the Holy Ghost was given to the *Gentiles*, their *Hearts were instantly purified by Faith*, Acts 15. 8, 9. To have the Spirit and remain one Moment an Unbeliever, is a Contradiction. So we read of *Sanctification of the Spirit unto Obedience*, 1 Pet. 1. 2. Where the Spirit is, he Acts as a Sanctifier; and where he Acts so, it instantly appears by the Fruit of Obedience; which flow naturally from it. So the Promise runs, Ezek. 36. 27. *I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my Statutes, &c.*

3. *In the Exercises of Faith and actions of Obedience, we have more and more of the Spirit given to us.* So we may understand the giving of the Spirit to them that obey Christ and believe in him, not of the *first Donation*, but of the *increased Degrees and Measures* of the same Spirit to those that have him already. In this Sense, we read of the Spirit's being *given and receiv'd*, John 7. 39. He was given before Christ's Ascension, but more sparingly; when

he was ascended, the Spirit came down in greater Floods; there was a more signal and liberal Effusion. So, though the Spirit is poured out, that we may believe, yet after we believe, there are still larger Portions continually given forth. This the Apostle calls the *supply of the Spirit*, Phil. 1. 19. 'Tis the same Word which is used, 2 Pet. 1. 5. *Add to your Faith*, &c. God does not stop at the *first Gift*, but vouchsafes *daily* further additional Supplies.

III. *How is the Work and Office of a Witness perform'd by the Spirit to our Lord Jesus?* Ans. This may be shewn under four Heads distinctly. How he did it before Christ's coming, and during Christ's stay on Earth, and after his Departure to Heaven? And how he does it even now at this present Time?

1. *How did the Spirit perform the Work and Office of a Witness to Christ before his Coming?* Chiefly by Prophecie. Now here two Things are to be prov'd; that Prophecie was indeed a Witness to Christ, and that the Spirit did witness by it.

1. *That Prophecie was a Witness to Christ.* This the Scripture most positively Asserts, Acts 10. 43. *To him give all the Prophets Witness*, &c. There are very numerous and plentiful Instances which might be given of the Truth of this, if we look into the Prophetical Writings of the Old Testament, which unanimously Point to Christ, as their main Subject. Our Lord calls the *Jews* to search the Scriptures *in General*, upon this account, *because they testified of him*, John 5. 39. Various Predictions concerning Christ even in the *Books of Moses*, in the *Psalms* of
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of David, in the Greater and Lesser Prophets, in those that Prophesied before the Captivity, and in them that Prophesied after the return out of Captivity. There were few or none among them all, but what foretold the coming of the Messiah, and gave some Character of him.

2. It was the Holy Spirit who witness'd hereby to Jesus Christ. The Spirit of God is said to testify in the Prophets, *Neb. 9. 30. 1 Pet. 1. 11.* Whatever is written in the Word, he is stiled a Witness of, *Heb. 10. 15.* Because he dictated to the Pen-men of the Word, not only the Matter and Substance, but the very Expressions themselves. For Prophecie (as the Apostle says) came not in Old Time by the Will of Man, but Holy Men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, *2 Pet. 1. 21.* When the Word was brought to them, it was not left to them to invent or chuse out such Terms as they thought best for the declaring and reporting of it; but they were acted herein by the Divine Spirit (as Passive Instruments) to deliver all that which he suggested and nothing else. The Gift of Prophecie was entirely his, without any antecedent Preparations of their own; and the Exercise of this Gift was from him, and under his Conduct and Management also. Therefore the Angel might justly say, *Rev. 19. 10. The Testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecie.* This Testimony was born to Christ before his Coming, and the Spirit was the Author of it.

SERMON XII.

June 30. 1696.

ACTS V. xxxii. latter Part.

And so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.

2. **H**OW did the Spirit perform this Work of a Witness, when Christ was upon the Earth? I will mention only Three Ways,

1. *His Visible Descent upon Christ at his Baptism, Luke 3. 22. The Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape, like a Dove, upon him, &c.* It is not to my present Purpose to enquire of what Nature or Substance this Appearance was, the Form or Resemblance here assum'd, is said to be that of a *Dove*, which was obvious to Sense, and seen by his forerunner, the Person that Baptiz'd him, which was the Token that God had given him to know the *Messiah* by, and this he bare Record of, John 1. 32, 33. That this was designed as a solemn Testimony to Jesus Christ, is manifest, because immediately after this he enter'd upon his *publick Ministry*; here was a Pledge first given of the Authority which he was
inve-

invested with, that he might be accordingly acknowledged and regarded in the Exercise of his Office, which till now he had not begun.

2. *The extraordinary Works that were done by Christ, these were the Seals of his Commission, and prov'd him to come from Heaven, for the Doctrine of an Impostor would never have been so signally asserted.* But now all these Works were done in the Power of the Holy Ghost, whom he is said to be anointed with, and partly for that End, *Acts 10. 38.* Particularly he cast out Devils by the Spirit of God, *Mat. 12. 28.* And for that Reason he charges the Jews with Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost (the unpardonable Sin) who ascrib'd this mighty Act of his to Beelzebub, the Prince of Devils, *ver. 31, 32.* If Christ himself only had been concern'd in this Work, this could have been Blasphemy against him only, but seeing the Spirit of God concurr'd with him in it, they were guilty of Blaspheming that Spirit also.

3. *The Resurrection of Christ, which was a considerable Testimony to his Eternal Deity, is ascrib'd to the Spirit likewise.* This Work is indeed in Scripture ascrib'd to all the Three Persons; to the Father, *Rom. 6. 4.* To Christ himself, *John 10. 17, 18.* And the Holy Ghost is interested in it too. *Rom. 8. 11.* *If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the Dead dwell in you, he that rais'd up Christ from the Dead, shall also quicken your mortal Bodies by his Spirit, &c.* The Connexion of the Words, and the Relation which one Thing in them bears to another, shews this to be the meaning, that God will revive and raise the Dead Bodies of Believers by the same Spirit, by whom he rais'd his Son, that Spirit who

who reunited the Humane Soul and Body of Jesus Christ, will reunite ours also. So 1 *Pet.* 3. 16. Quicken'd in the Spirit, the same Spirit by which he Preach'd to the Disobedient in the Days of *Noah*, ver, 19, 20. with *Gen.* 6. 3.

3. *How did the Spirit witness to Christ after his Departure into Heaven?* I mean in the Times of the Apostles, and in those first Ages of the Gospel.

Ans. 1. *By the Revelation of the Mysteries of the Gospel to the Apostles, which they were to Preach to others.* This we have an Account of from Christ himself. *John* 16. 12, 13, 14, 15. *I have yet many Things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now; howbeit when the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you into all Truth, &c. He shall Glorifie me, for he shall receive of mine and shew it unto you; which is repeated in the next Words.* The Disciples then were weak in the Faith, prepossess'd with carnal Notions about the Kingdom of Christ, and at that Time also overwhelm'd with Sorrow, upon the Notice of his intended Departure; and by this means they were uncapable at the present, of Learning all that they needed to be taught; now Jesus Christ, who consider'd their weakness, and dealt with them according to it, refers them to be more fully instructed by the promised Spirit; who though he did not discover any new Truths which they never heard, yet he brought old Truths to their Remembrance with new *Illumination*; 'he help'd their remaining Ignorance and Infirmary, in giving them a clearer Understanding of all the Things of Christ, of all those Doctrines concerning Christ, which were hid and veil'd from them before.

2. *By*

2. By endowing them with a miraculous Power of doing those Things, which were above the utmost activity of Nature, for the Confirmation of the Christian Doctrine. Thus he is said, to give Testimony to the Word of his Grace, in granting Signs and Wonders to be done by their Hands, Acts 14.

3. God bearing them Witness with Signs and Wonders, and divers Miracles, and Gifts of the Holy Ghost, Heb. 2. 4. A great many of those supernatural Effects were produced by his means, in the Course of their Ministry, and some of them such as even exceeded what were wrought by our Lord himself. So he had told them that it should be, John 14. 12. *He that believeth on me, the Works which I do, shall he do also, and greater Works, than these shall he do, because I go to my Father.* I would not go about to restrain this Text to the Apostles (because Christ puts it in larger Terms, *He that believeth, &c.*) but undoubtedly, it was verified in them. They were enabled to Work the same Miracles which he did, and in some Respects such as out-did them, Chap. 9. The Healing of those that were laid upon Beds and Couches in the Streets with the Shadow of Peter passing by, ver. 15. of this Chapter, and Chap. 19. 11, 12. We read of special Miracles wrought by the Hands of Paul, so that from his Body were brought unto the Sick, Handkerchiefs or Aprons, and the Diseases departed from them, &c. The Reason of these greater Works done by the Apostles, was Christ's going to the Father; which made Way for an eminent pouring forth of the Spirit, and this tended not so much to the Reputation of their particular Persons (for they could not Work them when they would) as to the Glory of Christ, whose late-

Interest was hereby advanced in the World.

3. *By the remarkable and numerous Conversions of great Multitudes to Christ, among whom they Preach'd.* As soon as ever the Holy Ghost was come upon them, there were Three Thousand Souls added to them; *That gladly receiv'd their Word and were Baptized,* Chap. 2. 41. Soon after, these were made up Five Thousand, Chap. 4. 4. All this was done in the compass of very few Days, and the first *Harvest* was the *Fruit* of one Sermon. *At Samaria, when Philip went and Preach'd Christ to them, 'tis said that the People with one accord gave heed to the Things which he spake;* Chap. 8. 5, 6. Which is the more extraordinary, because they had all given heed to *Simon* the Sorcerer before, *from the least to the greatest,* ver. 10. What a strang and marvellous turn was here in an whole City, upon the Preaching of the Gospel? In many other Places, the Word of God grew mightily and prevail'd, Chap. 19. 20. It got ground against all the Opposition both of *Jews* and *Gentiles*. The Preachers of it were made to *Triumph* in Christ, and baffled all contrary attempts, from open *Enemies*, and false *Brethren*, and overcame the *Devil* by the Word of their Testimony. And the way of doing all this, is explain'd to us, 1 Cor. 2. 4. *My Speech, and my Preaching was in Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power.* The Spirit of God accompanied their Word, and made it thus successful.

4. *By the supernatural Gifts which were bestowed upon other Believers also, as well as the Apostles.* The Truth of this might be made out by several Instances, if it were needful. *Acts* 10. 44. *While Peter spake, the Holy Ghost fell on all them.*

them which heard the Word, viz. *Cornelius, and his Kindred and Friends, whom he had call'd together,* ver. 24. But how did he fall on them? *Peter himself explains it, Chap. 11. 15. As on us at the beginning; i. e. in a miraculous extraordinary Manner.* So Christ had said, *Mark 16. 17. These Signs shall follow them that believe; in my Name shall they cast out Devils, they shall spake with new Tongues, &c.* Not only they that Publish the Gospel, but they that receiv'd it, were many of them thus eminently gifted by the Holy Ghost; and this was much for the Honour of Christ, whom they believed in, and serv'd to rescue his Gospel from that Contempt and Reproach which the World was so apt every where to pour upon it.

5. *By the admirable Patience and Resolution both of the Apostles and other Believers in the extream Sufferings which they underwent for Christ and the Gospel.* I think (says Paul) that God hath set forth us the Apostles, as it were appointed to Death, 1 Cor. 4. 9. He protests for his own Part, that he Dyed daily, Chap. 15. 31. Stood in jeopardy every Hour, ver. 30. Others, to whom he writes, *endured great fights of Afflictions,* Heb. 10. 32. Not little Skirmishes, but continual Combats. What vast numbers of them crown'd all at last with Martyrdom, which is the most peculiar Notion of witnessing? And with what meekness and undauntedness was all this done, as by Men that had fully learnt to despise their own Lives, and dearest Comforts, together with the greatest Cruelties of their Adversaries. But whence did all this proceed? From the Spirit of Glory resting on them, 1 Pet. 4. 14. *As Stephen being full of the Holy Ghost, saw the*
Glory

Glory of God, when his Murderers gnash their Teeth, Acts 7. 54, 55. Their dying witness to Christ, was through the special Assistance of his Blessed Spirit.

4. *How does the Spirit witness to Christ, even now in our own Times?* For there is a never failing Testimony which he gives still, and will always give to the End of the World. Not by *Voices, Dreams, or Enthusiastick Inspirations*, which are usually dangerous Delusions, where they are pretended and rested on, but in such Ways as are safe and clear, and highly beneficial. As

1. *The Spirit witnesses at this very Day to Jesus Christ in the written Gospel.* This is the standing Memorial and Register of all Divine Testimony. There the Doctrine of Christ is preserved uncorrupt, and is the same in writing to us, that it was originally to the first Christians; and here we have a sufficient History of the Miracles which recommended and backt this Doctrine. I say, a sufficient History, sufficient to Answer the End, though not a compleat History of all that was done. John 20. 30, 31. *Many other Signs did Jesus in the Presence of his Disciples, which are not written in this Book, but these are Written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Son of God, &c.* They were not only wrought, but are written in Order to our Believing; this puts it out of doubt, that we are bound to Believe upon the Testimony of those Miracles, which we never saw, as faithfully related; if they were to be renewed in every Age, the commonness of them would make them lose their End; and every Generation after they are ceased, might challenge a Repetition

petition of them, as well as one; and to what Purpose should Persons be enjoyn'd to tell the wonderful Works of God to their Posterity, if they were not oblig'd to give Credit to them? As *Exod. 10. 2.* And many other Places.

2. *He witnesses to Christ by the Operations and Effects which the Gospel hath upon all the chosen of God; for hereby it is distinguish'd from the Word of Man, even by its Effectual Workings, 1 Thess.*

2. 13. There is no Comparison between them in their Natures, *For what is the Chaff to the Wheat? Jer. 23. 28.* Nor in their Operative Vertues; *For is not my Word like as a Fire? saith the Lord, and like an Hammer, &c. ver. 29.*

This shews the Power of the Spirit attending it; this is that which puts an Edge upon the Word, and gives a force to it; which makes it quick and mighty, sharp and searching in the Work of Conviction; hereby it takes hold of Sinners, *Casts down Imaginations, and brings every thought into Captivity to the Obedience of Christ, 2 Cor. 10. 5.* The Word alone would not do this; *but as it comes in Power, and in the Holy Ghost, 1 Thess. 1. 5.* There are Impressions of the Majesty and Authority of God upon the Word, stamp'd by the Spirit, but the same Spirit must enable us to discern them; as a Stranger must Learn to know an Artificer's Workmanship from himself.

3. *By giving us an inward Experience and feeling of the Things of Christ.* Spiritual Sences are a great Advantage to those that have them, and whoever have them, are beholden to the Spirit for them. Hence it is, that the Things of Christ, are called the Things of the Spirit of God, *which the natural Man neither does receive,*

nor can know, 1 Cor. 2. 14. A meer notional acquaintance with them, is vain and insignificant, and yet this is all that any Man in the World by Nature, without the help of the Spirit, can Rise up to. We know them by receiving them; they are strange Things, till they are taken in, and made Familiar to us, by real and experimental Knowledge. Therefore 'tis said, *He that believeth on the Son of God hath the Witness in himself*, 1 John 5. 10. That Verbal Testimony which is without him in the Scripture, is then transcrib'd within him on his own Heart; he is satisfied from himself, which is the highest and fullest Satisfaction.

4. *By the producing of Faith in Christ, which is a Work that's never fulfilled in any Soul, where be is not given*; for 'tis one of his Titles, *the Spirit of Faith*, 2 Cor. 4. 13. He infuses the Habit, he excites to every Act. Divine Supernatural Faith requires a Divine and Supernatural Agent. 'Tis he that effectually Reproves for the Sin of unbelief, *John* 16. 9. He discovers the Disease, he applies the Remedy. 'Tis a part of the Mystery of Godliness, that *Jesus Christ is believed on in the World*, and another part of it is, that he is *justified in the Spirit*, 1 Tim. 3. 16. But one part Contributes to the unriddling of the other. If Christ were not justified in the Spirit, he would not be believ'd on in the World. Christ is justified in or by the Spirit, whenever any one in the World is persuaded to believe; they are the Spirits internal Arguments on the behalf of Christ, that sway the Soul to a receiving of, and closing with him. He reveals those Things concerning Christ to us, which could not enter into
our

our Hearts to conceive of him, 1 Cor. 2. 9, 10.

5. *By the strengthening and increasing of this Faith daily, after he hath produc'd it.* There are gradual Displaies of the Glory and Excellency of Christ to the believing Soul; all is not manifested at once; there are fresh Communications of Light and Grace, as long as we are in the World, that our Faith may grow, and that what is lacking in it, may be perfected. According as the Spirit enriches us in the Progress of our Sanctification, the *Testimony of Christ is confirmed in us*, 1 Cor. 1. 6. He grounds and settles us, and makes us unmoveable from the Hope of the Gospel; he fortifies and establishes us against various contrary Temptations, whereby the Devil is frequently endeavouring to loosen our hold of Christ, and beat us off from him. We are poor wavering, unsteady Creatures when we are left to our selves; rejoicing one Moment, and drooping the next, confidently assured of that at one Time, which we are ready to call in Question at another. The best Believers in the World will most humbly own this; the strongest Faith would certainly fail, if the Cause of Christ in the Soul were not often pleaded over again by the Spirit, as an Antidote for the Motions to Infidelity.

IV. *Use.* There are several Things which from hence we may be informed of, and exhorted to.

1. *There are several Things which we may be informed of.* As

1. *Jesus Christ never will, nor can be left with-*

out a Witness, because the Eternal Spirit is his Witness, who will never withdraw his Testimony. This Spirit of Christ is given to all that obey him, and he testifies of Christ to them, and by them to others; but if we could suppose, this whole Generation of the righteous to be extinct (which yet shall never be; as long as the Earth remains) if all these Humane Witnesses were slain, and not one left to stand up on the behalf of Christ in the World, yet while the Holy Ghost survives as a faithful Witness in Heaven, 'tis impossible that Christ should be destitute. Let the Rage and Malice of the World against Christ go as far as it can, in stopping the Mouths or shedding the Blood of all that receive or bear the Record which God hath given of his Son, the Spirit cannot be prevented from doing constant Honour to Jesus Christ.

2. *The Word of Christ hath a better Foundation, than any Testimony from Man, or from any Church, or Party of Men whatever.* As Christ said, *He had a greater Witness than that of John, John 5. 36. Concerning thy Testimonies, I have known of Old, says David, that thou hast founded them for ever, Psalm 119. 152.* But if mortal Witnesses were their only Supporters, they would be as liable to fade and perish, to be subverted and destroyed, as other Inferiour Things. To build the Credit of the Gospel upon Humane Tradition, is like putting the Ark of the Testimony into a wooden Cart, which will be apt to shake and reel, if not to tumble. *The Church of God is the Pillar and Ground of the Truth, 1 Tim. 3. 15.* To hold it forth indeed, not to hold it up; not such a Pillar as Houses stand upon, but as Writings hang upon for Publick Notice.

3. *The*

3. *The unrighteous Judgment of Satan and the World against Christ, is and will be perfectly reversed. Now is the Judgment of this World; says Christ, John 12. 31. So Chap. 16. 11. When the Spirit is come, he will Reprove (or Convince) the World of Judgment, because the Prince of this World is judged. I take these Two Texts to refer to one and the same Thing; for the Prince of this World, and the World it self pass the same Judgment on Jesus Christ, and the Judgment of both is very unjust; the World and its Prince, make up as it were but one Person, the Head and the Body; and they exactly Agree and Joyn in the same Sentence, to condemn our Lord Jesus. But here is a Witness that nulls this Sentence; and plainly proves the Iniquity and Falshood of it; and indeed none of the Devil's Devices can stand, when God himself comes forth to withstand and oppose them.*

4. *It must needs be a lying Spirit that speaks a Word against Christ, or that derogates any Thing from him. 1 Cor. 12. 3. I give you to understand, that no Man speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed. Whatever is spoken by any to the dishonour of our Lord Jesus cannot proceed from the Spirit of God. This is most certain, because the Spirit of God cannot contradict himself, he cannot testifie for him, and against him too. The Holy Ghost is Christ's Witness, the unclean Spirit is his Adversary; and too many Tongues are guided by this unclean and wicked Spirit, that pretend to Prophecie in Christ's Name; and whereas a true Witness delivereth Souls, Prov. 14. 25. These do lay snares for their Ruine and Destruction.*

5. *They that have the Spirit of God cannot err in what is essential to the Faith of Christ, and necessary to Salvation.* They are undoubtedly taught to hold the Substance of Divine Testimony, though they may be mistaken in lesser Particulars. This is hinted by what our Lord says, *Mat. 24. 24. There shall arise false Christs and false Prophets, and shall shew great Signs and Wonders, insomuch that (if it were possible) they shall deceive the very Elect.* That Parenthesis is the most material Part of the Proposition; there is no possibility of any of God's chosen and called ones miscarrying by a fundamental Delusion; they have a Resident Witness for Christ in their own Bosoms, who secures them from it.

6. *Unbelief is a special Sin against the Holy Ghost; all unbelief is so, though all unbelief (and perhaps no meer unbelief) is not the Sin against the Holy Ghost.* It is the Spirit that beareth Witness, because the Spirit is Truth, 1 John 5. 6. But he that believeth not, makes him a Liar; ver. 10. Hypocrisie is a lying to the Lord (as *Ananias* and *Sapphira* lyed to the Holy Ghost) but infidelity is a belying of him, *Jer. 5. 12.* 'Tis a painting of the Spirit of God like the Sons of Men, who are Lyars upon Record, *Rom. 3. 4.* Yea, like the Devil, who is the *Father of Lyes*, *John 8. 44.* This black aggravated Evil is included in the not receiving of the Spirit's witness.

2. *There are some Things, which we may hence be exhorted to.*

1. *Set your Seal to the Truth of the Spirits Testimony unto Christ, by Believing in him; and reject it not against your selves. Embrace him with all your Hearts upon the high and honourable*
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Commendation which the Holy Ghost gives of him. How readily do we repose a Confidence in Creatures, when we have receiv'd a worthy Character of them from Persons of known Integrity! And shall we be influenc'd more by the Witness of Man, than by the Witness of God? God forbid. How much greater Encouragements have we to Divine, than humane Faith? There are infallible Grounds for Divine Faith to rest upon, which for humane cannot be.

2. *Grieve not the Spirit of God by Sin, that he may not deliver you up, nor leave you alone to be led away by Error.* The Holy Ghost is often provok'd by Men's loose Conversations to give them over to some unsound Opinions. Practical Godliness is an excellent Means for the maintaining of Doctrinal Orthodoxy. *If any Man will do his Will, he shall know of the Doctrine,* John 7. 17. Follow the Spirit's Guidance in the Course of your Lives, if you would not forfeit it, as to the regulating of your Judgments. Be govern'd by him as a Spirit of Holiness, if you would be instructed by him as a Spirit of Truth.

3. *Whatever the Spirit in and according to the Scripture testifies against, give it no Entertainment.* That cannot be the Doctrine of Christ, which he doth not attest. 'Tis another Gospel, and therefore not to be receiv'd, though an Angel from Heaven were the Publisher of it. *We have a sure Word of Prophecie, whereunto we do well to take heed,* 2 Pet. 1. 19. That must be no Article of our Faith, which we have not first tried, or which upon the Trial, is not approv'd by this Rule of Faith. According as

the Testimony of the Spirit in the Word is, we are to Judge of every Cause which comes before us.

4. *Regard the Witness of the Spirit, with respect to Christ in you, as well as Christ without you.* He is a capable Witness as to both, for he searcheth all Things; he knows the State and Disposition of our Souls towards God, as well as the out-goings of the Heart of God to us. He that can reveal Christ in us, is undoubtedly the fittest to discover us to our selves. Therefore, *what our Conscience bears us Witness in the Holy Ghost* (as *Rom. 9. 1.*) Is to be comfortably acquiesced in, as a faithful unerring Report. If Conscience it self be as a thousand Witnesses, how much more when the Holy Ghost concurs with it.

5. *Be the help of the Spirit in Order to the giving of your Testimony to Christ, as you ought to do, in your several Places,* 1 *Cor. 12. 3.* *No Man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.*

Obj. What think you then of those that call Christ Lord, Lord, and do not the Things which he says?

Ans. 'Tis true, the meer repeating of such words is easie, and may be done without the Spirit; but if we say it from a right Principle, in a right Manner, and to a right End, it must be by the Holy Ghost. And therefore this saying, is like that confessing, 1 *John 4. 15.* Not a bare Verbal Confession with the Mouth, but joyn'd with believing in the Heart.

6. *Manifest your having of the Spirit, by your ready, resolute and constant witness-bearing on the behalf of Christ.* Be not asham'd of the Testimony of

of our Lord, 2 Tim. 1. 8. 'Tis the greatest Honour to us, when we are call'd to any such Service to our great Redeemer. A Work which is done by the Spirit of God himself, must unquestionably be a Matter of Glory and Reputation to such as we. Nor is it only upon solemn extraordinary special Occasions, but in the whole Course of our Lives, in all that we think, speak and do, we should testify to our Lord Jesus. In short, you who have the Spirit of Christ dwelling in you, can do no less among a World of Men, that ungratefully despise him, than by your whole behaviour proclaim your deserved esteem of him.

S E R.

SERMON XIII.

September 8. 1696.

MARK X. xxvi, xxvii.

*And they were astonished out of measure,
saying among themselves, Who then can
be saved ?*

*And Jesus looking upon them saith, With
Men it is impossible, but not with God :
For with God all Things are possible.*

TO understand the occasion of the Words,
we must look back as far as *ver. 17.* of
this Chapter, where we find a young Ruler
(as two of the other Evangelists describe him,
Mat. 19. 20. Luke 18. 18.) addressing himself
with some Earnestness and Reverence to Christ,
for his Judgment and Advice in a very impor-
tant Case ; *What shall I do, that I may inherit
Eternal Life ?* Christ framing his Answer ac-
cording to the Principles then generally em-
brac'd, of living by doing, refers him to the
Commandments : He that put the Question ha-
ving too good an Opinion of himself, confi-
dently

dently affirms his keeping of them all; Christ in his Reply, to convince him that he was not so perfect as he pretended himself to be, offers him a Test which he could not comply with; *viz.* Selling what he had, and giving to the Poor, and taking up the Cross, and following him. This was no unreasonable Proof of his Obedience; for a resolved Preference of Heaven to all that this World affords, and actual parting with all for it, when we are called thereunto, is every one's necessary Duty. But this Ruler was sad at that saying, and went away grieved; Carnal Men may be sorry that they cannot bring down God to their own Terms, when they refuse to come up to his; they would reconcile Things in Heaven, and Things in Earth, and enjoy their Portion in both Worlds. Hereupon our Lord applies the rest of his Discourse to his Disciples, as being most concern'd for their Satisfaction and Improvement; to them therefore he says, *How hardly shall they that have Riches, enter into the Kingdom of God?* ver. 23. These Words astonish the Disciples, and yet Christ with little Variation repeats them, ver. 24. And enforces them by a Proverbial Comparison, which was yet more startling, ver. 25. *It is easier for a Camel to go through the Eye of a Needle, than for a Rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of God.* Whether that which we render here a Camel, should be rather Translated a Cable-ropes, (because the Original Word signifies both) is not much material; but certainly a Man with great Possessions, loaded with thick Clay, might be fitly enough represented by a Camel, carrying Burdens more for others than himself, and the

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Entrance into Life being strait and narrow, may very well be said to resemble the Passage through the Eye of a Needle. But this brings us to the Text it self, wherein we have two Parts; the Amazement of the Disciples at Christ's Doctrine, and his own Explication of it.

1. *The Amazement of the Disciples at this Doctrine of Christ, ver. 26. And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, who then can be saved?* The Word here, which we render by *Astonishment*, is not the same with that *ver. 24.* But more significant, as if the Mind were not only struck, but struck out as it were, with Horror and Confusion. Besides 'tis added here, *out of measure*, or abundantly and exceedingly; for this Doctrine appear'd very rigorous and severe to them, as if it shut out all Persons almost from a possibility of Salvation. Because

1. *Though all Men are not Rich, nor perhaps the most, yet there are few, but what desire to be so, and the Love of Riches (which is indeed the Disease) prevails, where there is not the Possession.* It was very common among the Jews in the Prophet's Time; *From the least to the greatest every one is given to Covetousness,* Jer. 6. 13. Chap. 8. 10. And 'tis not less natural to other People.

2. *The Rich seem to have the greatest Advantages and Helps for Heaven, beyond those that are of an Inferiour Rank; and therefore if their Salvation be so difficult, they concluded that others might Despair of it.*

3. *The Poor have their Temptations also, and fall into divers Sins, as well as the Rich; and there*

there are other Things, which must be acknowledged to be Impediments and Obstructions in the way to Heaven, as well as Riches; so that they thought, if one stumbling-block was so fatal and pernicious, the rest might be as bad, and then all Mankind must be in a miserable Case.

2. *Christ's own Explication of this Doctrine;* ver. 27. *Jesus looking upon them, saith, with Men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.* Here are Three Things to be considered,

1. *The general Ground which Christ speaks upon; That all Things are possible with God.* This is a Notion which shines clear by natural Light, the Being of God is not more demonstrable than this, that Infinite and Unlimited Power belongs to him. This is plentifully confirm'd in Scripture, *Job 42. 2. I know that thou canst do every Thing. Jer. 32. 17. There is nothing too hard for Thee. And Luke 1. 37. With God nothing shall be impossible.* If there were any Thing which God could not do, which is fit to be done, and becoming or consistent with his other Perfections, he could not be God.

2. *The Particular Truth which he laies down, and builds upon this Foundation. With Men it is impossible,* that either the Rich or any other Person should be sav'd, but not with God. We must not measure God's Power by our own; because *this is marvellous in our Eyes;* we are not to think that 'tis so in his, *Zech. 8. 6.* Though Man cannot withdraw his own Heart from an inordinate Desire and Pursuit of such Temporal Enjoyments, yet God can enable us to do it. Though we cannot recover our selves out
of

of this Snare of the Devil, the *strong God* can perform it for us; He can give us other Hearts than what we have by Nature, and produce such a change in us, as we know not how to suppose; where Corruption makes the greatest Opposition, he can Conquer it; so that a Poor Man shall be *Rich in Faith*, and a Rich Man *Poor in Spirit*.

3. *The Posture and Aspect of Christ in delivering this Truth.* He looked upon them (i. e. the Disciples) and said, &c. There seems to be a double Reason for this.

1. *Christ hereby discovers his Knowledge of their Thoughts, and the most secret Passages of their Conversation:* For what they said in the foregoing Verse, they did not speak so as that he might hear it, but *among themselves*; or (as the words import) *one to another*.

2. *Christ hereby points out them, as singular Instances and Examples of the Truth which he had proposed:* For as there were Holy Men under the *Old Testament*, who were nevertheless rich in this World, such as *Abraham, Lot, Job, &c.* And *Zaccheus*, under the *New Testament*, a rich Publican, was converted to Christ, *Luke 19. 2.* So these Disciples, upon Christ's call, had left all and follow'd him, *ver. 28.* following the Text; and their *All* was as much to them, as the rich Man's larger Estate can be to him. So that in them was this saying of our Lord fulfilled.

Observ. The Overcoming of the Difficulties of Salvation must be resolved into the Almighty Power of Divine Grace. Here,

I. Shew, What are the chief Difficulties of Salvation to be overcome. II. How

II. How this must be resolved into the Power of God's Grace.

III. Why it must be so.

IV. Use.

1. *What are the chief Difficulties of Salvation to be overcome?*

Ans. *There is the Difficulty of Believing.* This is *primarily necessary* to Salvation, and yet one of the *hardest* Things in the World to be done aright. The Counterfeits of Faith are frequent and feisable enough, but they that imagine unfeigned Faith to be an easie matter, know not what it is. 'Tis commonly said, That we readily believe, what we wish to be true; but this is a very great mistake; we have several Instances in Scripture to the contrary. When *Jacob's* Sons, at their second return out of *Egypt*, told their Father that *Joseph was yet alive, and Governor of the Land*, his Heart *fainted*, for he believed them not, *Gen. 45. 26.* When Christ shew'd his Disciples his Hands and his Feet, *they believed not for joy, Luke 24. 41.* We are often slow in believing, what we are most eager in desiring. So we may sometimes believe that which appears to be more incredible, or is indeed more difficultly credible, and yet still doubt of easier and less things; as *Lazarus's* Sisters believed that their Brother would rise again at the *last Day*, and yet question'd his being raised *after four Days, John 11. 24. with 39.* Now if Men stick and hesitate at the least things, it shews the Work to be much more difficult, than if they stumbled at the greatest. But more particularly the Work of Faith is difficult at *first*, and *then* living by Faith, and at *last* dying by Faith.

1. *The*

1. *The work of Faith, at the beginning of the Christian Life; our first believing is difficult, when we come out of a state of Sin, into a state of Grace.* A Soul that is deeply convinced of its own Guilt, struggles with great Discouragements in laying hold of Divine Forgiveness. He that effectually declares this unto Man, needs to be an Interpreter, one of a thousand, that is (says Dr. Owen) *Christ himself; Job 33. 23.* Whatever vain Men may talk of being perswaded by reason, that God is reconcilable; the Sinners own Conscience, when truly awaken'd by the Commandment coming home, argues with a great deal of strength against it. He that is pursued by a sense of Sin and fear of Wrath, is far more apt to run into downright Despair, than to fly for Refuge to the Hope which is set before him. The threatnings of deserved Vengeance are much rather regarded than the free Promises of Remission. As God said to the *Jews*, with respect to their backslidings into Idolary, *Jer. 5. 7. How shall I pardon thee for this?* So the poor convinced Sinner, that hath his high and hainous Provocations set in order before him, is ready to cry, *How shall God pardon me for these?* 'Tis a Mystery which he knows not how to apprehend; a comfortable Doctrine, but he cannot embrace it.

2. *Living by Faith; for this the Just must do; after the Sinner is made Righteous by the Obedience of Christ, he must still go on from Faith to Faith, as the Righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel, Rom. 1. 17.* Now this is no light matter; whatever the Speculation be in their esteem, who never arrived to any real Experience, the Practice is not. To live by Faith in the midst
of

of various Temptations and Tryals, of Darknes and Desertion, of cross Providences, and cutting Rebukes, is an hard saying to Flesh and Blood. Is it indeed an easie thing to believe, that we shall be preserved blameless, and kept to Salvation, and never pluck'd out of the Hand of Christ, when we find our selves many times loose and wavering, and incident to numberless Miscarriages? Is it very easie to believe, that our Justification is perfect, when our Sanctification is so defective? That we are compleat in Christ, when we are so, ~~meanly~~ meanly furnish'd in our selves, that upon a review we might say with *Paul*, *In us there dwells no good thing*? Is it easie to look upon God as our Saviour, and wait for him, when he hides himself? Is it easie to stick close to him, when he seemingly forsakes us; and to believe his Love, when we feel his Anger; and to trust his naked Word, when we see no appearances or likelihoods of Performances, but the contrary? They are insensible in Spiritual Affairs, that will not acknowledge a Difficulty in these things.

3. *Dying in Faith.* This last Act of a Believer, is as requisite as all the rest: 'Tis said of the Antient Patriarchs, *Heb. 11. 13.* That *they all died in Faith*: For to cast away our Confidence then, is to cast away our Souls. And yet to maintain and keep up lively hopes in the Agonies of Death, to depart, like old *Simeon*, in the joyful sight of God's Salvation, to cleave firmly to Christ, when Flesh and Heart fail, to close our own Eyes, and commit our selves boldly to Divine Guidance through the Valley of the Shadow of Death; when we are stepping out of the World, is certainly hard work to such as we

are. That Faith must not be weak nor little, which makes a Man content to be strip'd of the Body, as *Aaron* of his Garments on the Mount, *Num.* 20. 28. to quit such a well-built commodious Tabernacle, and lie down in the Dust. This seems unnatural, after we have dwelt in this House so many Years, and therefore scarcely to be perform'd without some more than ordinary violence. The love of Life will probably hold out as long as Life it self; and the fear of Death in some measure, till we have tasted Death; and a World that we never saw cannot be very alluring, except the Eye of Faith be very clear and strong. If believing, under such Disadvantages, when we come to die, be not difficult, nothing is so.

2. *There is the difficulty of getting the Victory over Sin.* Such a Victory must be gotten by every one that is saved; for where Sin is in Dominion, there can be no Reigning in Life thro' Christ. 'Tis plain, That *the Motions of Sins do work in our Members, to bring forth Fruit unto Death, Rom.* 7. 5. These Motions therefore, tho' they cannot be prevented, must be repelled: Now an Enemy that is got within us, hath mighty Advantage against us, and it requires a great deal of strength to be delivered from him; we cannot dispossess him, and yet we must overcome him; we cannot drive him out, and yet we must keep him under: Sin will have a being in us, and be giving continual disturbance to us, and yet it must be so far destroyed, as not to have command over us. This is a very difficult Achievement, and every one engaged in the holy Warfare finds it so; but particularly,

1. *The entire abandoning of customary Sins, is hard work.* Sins that have been made familiar to us by long practice, and frequent repetition, in so much that perhaps we fall into them, before we are aware, and scarcely know when we have committed them, are difficult to be forsaken. The Holy Ghost expresses this by a direct impossibility; *Jer. 13. 23. Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the Leopard his spots? then may ye do good, that are, &c. q. d. one is as easie as the other.* The cure of inveterate Distempers, that have rooted themselves in our Bodies, and prevailed along time together, is no slight business; Remedies of small force will avail nothing in such cases.

2. *The absolute renouncing of Constitution Sins, is still harder.* That there are some sins peculiarly suited to our several Tempers, is undeniable, and to relinquish these is a work of special difficulty. A Man cannot guess at the subduing of his own Iniquity, by his mastery of some other less pleasing Lusts. 'Tis easier to conquer all the rest, than this one: A Man that's almost persuaded to give up all, stops when it comes to his darling Sin: This Image of Jealousie must be spared, though his other Idols be thrown down, and broken in pieces. This above all is *the sin that easily besets us, Hebr. 12. 1.* and the sin which is hardly to be resisted, and vanquish'd by us.

3. *The weaning of the Heart from the Love of every sin.* We are not true Conquerors, till this be done: So long as any sin hath any room or interest in our Affections, 'tis really predominant, and we are properly its Servants, though we may be restrain'd from outwardly and openly obey-

ing it. Now this is a case that too often happens; sin retires out of the visible Conversation into its strong Hold, the Bosom of the Sinner, and there it remains invincible: Many times there are few of its Acts to be discovered in the Life, and yet there are secret strong desires and inclinations to it in the Soul. *Balaam* did not curse *Israel*, but his mind was set that way to the very last, *Josh.* 24. 10. 'Tis a thousand times harder to hate one sin, than to leave many.

3. *There is difficulty of standing against the wiles of the Devil, Ephes.* 6. 11. The strength of this Adversary is not contemptible, but his cunning is more formidable; we need to be very vigilant against him as a roaring Lion, but much more as he is a winding Serpent; we are in greater danger of his stealing us to Hell by Subtilty, than of his haling us thither by meer armed Fury. We that are so prone to be carried about by the Craftiness of Men, who lie in wait to deceive, have much greater cause to be afraid of the Arts and Impostures of Satan; but particularly in many things 'tis difficult to discern him, and when we do, to avoid him.

1. 'Tis difficult many times to discern the wiles of the Devil; as 'tis said of the ways of the strange Woman, they are moveable, that thou canst not know them, *Prov.* 5. 6. So may we say of the Paths of the Destroyer, they are intricate and disguised, that we cannot find them out: He does not dig many open Pits, but Graves which appear not, which while we think to walk over, we fall into. The Holy Ghost says indeed, *We are not ignorant of Satan's devices,* 2 *Cor.* 2. 11. but I conceive, that must be comparatively understood;

derstood ; the Saints of God are much more acquainted with them than other Men, though they know them less, in respect of concernment in them, *Rev. 2. 24.* they know them better, so as to beware of them. We are not universally ignorant, though we know but in part, neither our Knowledge nor Ignorance is total ; some of his Devices are known to us, though many are hid from us. He too often deceives us by his imitating of God, covering himself with light, as with a Garment ; and when he is so covered, our Eyes are so dazled, that 'tis hard to see him as he is.

2. *'Tis difficult many times to avoid him, even when we do discern him ; because our Duty generally lies betwixt Extreame on both hands, and when we run from one Extreame, he drives us into another ; and in the hurry of Temptation to keep the middle point is very hard.* The Church of Corinth were first too remiss in dealing with their incestuous Member, and afterwards too severe. When we find Satan getting an Advantage against us one way, to secure our selves from him, we run too far the other way, and this answers his end as well, and is therefore sily promoted by him. Either Sin is so small that it needs no forgiveness, or else 'tis greater than can be forgiven ; if Mercy be not presum'd upon, then it is despair'd of. So in the case of Divine Chastisements, the Devil tempts us either to despise them, and harden our selves against them, or else throw up all, and utterly faint under them, whereas our Duty lies between both, *Hebr. 12. 5.* So in the case of natural Affections to natural Relations, where we have not only allowance, but a command, 'tis hard so to govern our selves,

but that Satan will make us either exceed, or fall short, either let out our Hearts too much or too little; either not love them enough, or over-love them; either be guilty of Neglect, or of Idolatry.

4. *There is a difficulty in the performing of those Duties, which seem to be contrary to each other.* Indeed the contrariety is but seeming, for all Duties are harmonious, and very well reconcilable, as all Scripture is, one part of it to another, notwithstanding the appearance of opposition in some places; but however in matters of Practice, 'tis really hard sometimes to know how to obey one Precept, without transgressing another. As,

1. *'Tis hard to mourn, as we ought, for sin, and yet to rejoice at the same time in Christ:* For we are to do both, and this godly Sorrow is never to shut out spiritual Joy; *For we are to rejoice in the Lord alway, Phil. 4. 4. 1 Thes. 5. 16.* Our Tears should never drown our Triumphs, nor our Lamentations silence our Songs; but as God sometimes causes his Rain to fall, even while he causes his Sun to shine, so even when we are bewailing the breaches of the Command, we should take in the Comforts of the Promise. Our Souls should be afflicted, and yet revived; Sin should be ever before us, and a Saviour too.

2. *'Tis hard to be duly thankful for the lowest degrees of Grace, and yet not to be contented with the highest measures of it.* There is a necessity upon us, as to both; a little Faith requires high Praises to God, and yet the greatest that ever Man had, is not to satisfy us. We are to forget those things which are behind, Phil. 3. 13. and yet constantly

stantly remember to bless God for the least of them. We must look beyond them in order to further attainments, and yet never ungratefully or contemptuously overlook them. We must neither say of our day of small things, *This is nothing*; nor yet must we say, *It is enough*.

5. *There is a difficulty in the right management of our selves in every Condition, whether prosperous or afflicted*: For there are particular Difficulties proper to both, as *Agur's* Prayer against Riches and Poverty does import.

1. *In a prosperous Condition, it is very hard to get our hearts thoroughly mortified to the Enjoyments of it*. The savour and relish of the things of God is often insensibly abated and lost very much, in a confluence of this World's delights. Men that are possessed of a great deal of outward Wealth, are mighty prone to place their Felicity in it, and set their Hearts upon it. If we compare *ver. 23, and 24.* here in the Context, it will teach us, That 'tis hard to have Riches, and not to trust in them; hard to depend on God as truly then, as if we had them not. The Holy Ghost very well knew the need which there is of giving such a charge to them that *are rich in this World*, 1 *Tim. 6. 17.* Solomon, who was able to make a Judgment from Experience, tells us the rich Man's thoughts; *His Wealth is his strong City, and an high Wall in his own Conceit*, *Prov. 18. 11.* And though Job could purge himself in this case, that *he had not made Gold his hope or Confidence*, *Chap. 31. 24.* yet he was a Man that few could match him, according to the Character which God gives of him twice, *That there was none like him in all the earth*, *Chap. 1. 8. 1, 2. 3.*

2. *In an afflicted Condition, 'tis hard to get up our Hearts to such a chearful Frame, and keep them in it, as the Word calls for.* A meek and a quiet Spirit under Sufferings, is an Ornament to a Believer, but this is not enough : The Believers in Scripture, that were set forth for our Examples, went higher ; and we find it difficult to reach that which they exceeded. We are ready to think our selves good Proficients, if we have our Passions so far subdued, as to be calm and still, not to rage and fret ; to forbear complaining and repining ; but how much harder is it to give thanks, and bless the Name of the Lord, in and for Distresses ? How much harder to Glory and take Pleasure in Infirmities, and to be *exceeding joyful in all our tribulation ?* 2 Cor. 7.4. This is so unnatural, to be glad of that which is most grievous to the Flesh, to glorifie the Lord in the Fires, and and bear the heaviest Calamities, as valuable Mercies, that the performance cannot be easie.

6. *There is the difficulty of living in the highest Exercise of every Grace, with the deepest Humility.* This is as necessary as any thing that can be named, and yet perhaps the hardest of all ; without Christ the best Duty, and the worst Sin (as one excellently says) are both alike ; and as the Prosperity of Fools destroys them, and their fullest Tables are their greatest Snares ; so not only our Sins, but our Duties may undo us, and will if they puff us up ; and yet how apt are we to swell, when we have gone through any service in a tolerable manner ? How few are there, in whom the lively Actings of Grace do not abate the sense of their Vileness, almost as much as the workings of Corruption encrease it ? As there

there are too many in the World that count this Doctrine absurd, so I am perswaded, that of all who are in Christ, there are none but what find the Practice difficult. 'Tis hard to walk very exactly with God, and yet to walk very humbly; to do with all our might, and yet entirely to renounce it when we have done, and mention nothing of it; to be rich in good Works, and yet as Beggars to live upon God's Free Gift, and with holy Self-denial to return that Answer to Christ, *Lord, when saw we thee an hungry, and fed thee?* The remnants of Spiritual Pride in every one of us, makes this very hard; the greatest in Christ's Kingdom should be the least in their own Eyes, but 'tis not very easie for them so to be.

SER.

SERMON XIV.

September 22. 1696.

MARK X. xxvi, xxvii.

*And they were astonished out of measure,
saying among themselves, Who then can
be saved?*

*And Jesus looking upon them saith, With
Men it is impossible, but not with God:
For with God all Things are possible.*

II. **H**OW must the overcoming of all these
Difficulties be resolv'd into the Power of
the Grace of God? This may be open'd under
two distinct Heads.

1. There is a gracious supernatural Power com-
municated to Believers, and inherent in them.
Two Things here should be a little clear'd,
that Believers have such a Power inherent in
them, and that 'tis communicated to them.

1. That Believers have such a Power inherent
in them. This is evident, and beyond all Dis-
pute; For,

1. Hence

1. Hence they are denominated strong; 1 John 2. 14. To be strong, and yet utterly destitute and void of Power, is a perfect Contradiction. Abraham was particularly commended for Strength of Faith, Rom. 4. 20. And who knows not that Faith is a Work fulfilled in us?

2. If the Children of God have no inherent Power, then the New-birth makes no Difference, between them and others, or between them and themselves before they were Born again. An unregenerate State is describ'd by being without Strength, Rom. 5. 6. And is a regenerate State so too? Is a Man as weak, when he is made alive to God, as when he was dead in Sin?

3. If Believers have no Power, then they are not chargeable with the Sin of spiritual Sloth; which they are so often incident to, and in Scripture accus'd of, Isa. 64. 7. There is none that stirreth up himself, &c. Wherein does slothfulness consist, but in not exerting and employing the Abilities given us? And yet how can this be, if we have none to use or to put forth?

4. What is any Grace indeed, but a Power gain'd over the contrary Corruption? The Spirit lusting against the Flesh, and the Law of the Mind warring at least (and for the most Part prevailing also) against the Law of the Members? Rom. 6. 14. is verified in Believers; Sin shall not have Dominion over you. Now where Sin loses the Dominion, Grace assumes it; and all Dominion supposes Power.

5. That this Power is communicated to Believers, though inherent in them. They cannot vaunt themselves upon this account, because the Spring and Original of it is not in themselves. They could have no more Power against Sin and

and Satan, except it were given them from above, then *Pilate* had against Christ. *The God of Israel is he that giveth Strength and Power unto his People*, Psalm 68. 35. He is the Fountain that dispenses it, they are but as the Cisterns that receive it. 'Tis ingratitude not to acknowledge the Gift, 'tis abominable Pride, to deny the Giver. Believers have such a Principle within them, but 'tis infused, not acquired; their Strength is in Part recovered, not by their own Means or Prævious endeavours, but by a Divine Vertue and Influence let out upon their Souls. The Spirit that dwelleth in us as Men, is a Spirit of Infirmary, the New Spirit which is given us as Believers, is a Spirit of Power. This we are neither to disown, nor to arrogate; the Holy Ghost lays down this Truth with Caution against both Extreams, 2 Cor. 3. 5. *Not that we are sufficient of our selves, as of our selves, but all our sufficiency is of God.* He does not say, we have no sufficiency absolutely, but we have none of our selves, God is the Author of it.

2. *There is an unexhausted Power to which Believers may and must have recourse for further Assistance.* This is that, which besides the Grace already given, the Scripture calls *Grace to help in Time of Need*, upon every particular Emergent Occasion, Heb. 4. 16. There is no Time wherein we do not need more Grace from God to draw out the Grace we have into Exercise, and to maintain it in Exercise also, 2 Tim. 2. 1. *Be strong in the Grace, which is in Christ Jesus.* The fulness of Grace which is treasur'd up in our Blessed Lord, must Relieve and Supply the defects of that Grace which is in us. Therefore

fore Paul ascribes his more abundant Labours, *Not to the Grace in him, but to the Grace of God which was with him*, 1 Cor. 15. 10. As we have necessity enough for all the Strength receiv'd, so our Case and Condition in this World requires a greater Strength to accompany and concur with us. This the Apostle stiles in another Place, *The Power of Christ resting upon him*, 2 Cor. 12. 9. The Word signifies Dwelling as in a Tent over him; as *David* speaks of *God's hiding him in his Pavilion*, Psalm 27. 5. Such a Screen and Defence was the Power of Christ to *Paul*; - Christ was the Subject of this Power, *Paul* the Object; Christ possess'd it, *Paul* had the benefit of it. And in a sober Sence, that which is for our Advantage may be called ours; because it is enjoyed by us, though not lodg'd in us. As when God had assured *Gideon* of his Presence, *The Lord is with thee*, Judg. 6. 12. He is bidden to go in this his might, ver. 14. *Gideon's* main Strength lay not in his being a mighty Man, but in his being assisted by the mighty God.

Quest. To what End should they that are actually furnish'd with an Holy Gracious Power for spiritual Services, have recourse notwithstanding to this Infinite Power of God?

Ans. There is a Threefold End to be regarded herein.

1. To secure the being of Grace; for Grace is the Workmanship of God, and not God, and therefore cannot support it self, nor stand without leaning upon him. The innate Strength of the New Creature is not the Foundation of a Saints Perseverance; for if he were not kept by the Power of God, he would be lost at last, 1 Pet. 1. 5. He

is

is kept by it from his Conversion to his Salvation, from the first beginning of his Confidence, till he hath receiv'd the End of his Faith; or else the strongest Grace in the World would fail.

2. *To carry on the Improvement of Grace.* A Believers Diligence will never add to his Stature, if God do not lift up his Head. Instead of getting more Strength (which we should daily do) he will rather lessen what he hath, and grow weaker than he was. But when God comes in with his Auxiliary Force, they that were ready to halt and go back, make the greatest Progress. *Isa. 40. 49. He giveth Power to the faint, and to them that have no might, he increaseth Strength.*

3. *In order to the vigorous Employment of Grace.* As Christ said of the Damsel, *She is not dead, but sleepeth*; so it may be said of many Christians, they are alive, but not awake; they are too drowsie and sluggish in their Course of Duty. But when fresh help is given in from Eternal Power, what lively Acts do gracious Habits produce! How nimbly do we move in our walk with God! As the Prophet says, *Hab. 3. 19. The Lord God is my Strength, and he will make my Feet, like Hinds Feet; i. e. swift and unwearied.*

III. *Why must the overcoming of the Difficulties of Salvation be thus resolv'd into the Power of God's Grace? What Reason is there for the placing of all upon that one Bottom?*

1. *The highest and most perfect Creatures have miscarried, when they stood in their own Strength; the Strength with which they were endow'd at their first Creation.*

1. *The*

1. *The Angels, the highest rank of Creatures, and in a most perfect State, fell from Heaven.* Though they excell'd in Strength, yet we see, it was not enough to bear them up without confirming Grace. They that always beheld the Face of God, lift up their Heels against him, and wickedly revolted from him. They that were the Top of the Creation, are sunk into an horrible Pit; they that were greater in Power and Might than any of the Things which God made besides, have betrayed their dangerous weakness by a foul and final Apostacy. 'Tis the harder to explain and give an account of their Fall, because they sinn'd without a Tempter. They had no Instigation to Evil from without themselves; and yet we find the mutability of their Natures was enough to expose them, because they were not, like the Elect Angels, their Companions, and the rest of their Kind, established in Christ.

2. *Adam, who was also made upright, after the Holy Image of God, without the least Bent or Inclination in his Soul to Evil, fell nevertheless.* That we, the Posterity of the first Man, whose Natures are already corrupted, and strongly byass'd with indwelling Sin, should run into all manner of Abominations, unless God restrain us, is no wonder; but it seems strange, that our pure and sinless Parents, that had such a stock of Righteousness to live upon, should so notoriously, and so quickly offend. How plainly does this shew, that a Creature (before a Sinner) given to change, cannot carry sufficient Preservatives from Sin within it self? Was the Power of standing so soon lost by innocent Man, and do any of his sinful Race expect to regain it,

it, and raise up themselves without being behold'n to God.

2. *The best and eminentest Saints have most manifestly felt, and readily own'd their necessary Dependence upon the Power of the Grace of God.* It may be, some young and raw Converts may be too rash and confident at first; their Imaginations go a great deal beyond their Strength, and they think they can do or suffer any thing for Christ, like foolish Children, when they begin to use their Legs, that venture further than they can with Safety, but grow more wary afterwards. So here Babes in Christ, being transported by the heat of their first Love, forget many Times how feeble and infirm they are, till God by leaving them, gives them some afflicting Proofs of it. But the most solid, well grown Christians, that are judicious as well as affectionate, that have tryed their Strength oftner, and consider'd Things better, that have really profited more in Religion, and attained nearer to the Resurrection of the Dead, these are always the most apprehensive of the Truth I am now upon. God's eldest Children, and that are of all others the fittest for Enjoyment of their glorious Inheritance, do still perceive, and are apt most freely to confess themselves incapable of yielding Holy Obedience, without Supplies of Power from the Spirit of Christ. *Paul* gives us the Report in an Hour of Temptation; though he had been caught up to Heaven above fourteen Years before, yet when he came down again, was like to be over-born by the buffetings of Satan, if God had not held him up. That Answer which Christ gave him, was all his Support, or else that chosen Vessel

fel had been broken in Pieces, 2 Cor. 12. 9. *He said to me, My Grace is sufficient for thee, my Strength is made perfect in weakness.*

3. *If both the Desire and the Performance in all spiritual Cases be the Effects of God's mighty Operation, then all must be resolved into his Power; for the Desires and Performances take in all.* Phil. 2. 13. *It is God which worketh in you, both to Will and to Do, &c.* If he Works in us these two Things, a fixed Inclination to good, and actual Execution of it, what is it that he does not Work?

1. *God Works the Will; all Holy Desires are by his Operation, Psalm 110. 3. Thy People shall be willing in the Day of thy Power.* 'Tis he that roots out our sinful Aversions and Reluctancies with his strong Hand. The changing and turning, and new moulding of the Heart is the sole Work of him that fashioned it at first. None can prevail upon the Soul to chuse and affect, what it naturally abhors, and flies from, but only he.

2. *God Works the Deed; all Holy Performances, are the proper Fruits of his efficacious Influence also.* This is undeniable, for in whatsoever Case that influence is withdrawn, though the Will continues, the Deed is wanting. Though he hath wrought in us to Will what we should do, yet we cannot do what we should and would. Is not Paul, and every Believer in the World, a clear Instance of this? Rom. 7. 18. *To Will is present with me, but how to perform, &c. I find not.* We desire to do a great deal better than we attain to do. David took Pleasure in Duty, and yet craves Ability for it, as a further additional Gift. Psalm 119. 35. *Make*

me to go in the Path, &c. for therein do I delight. Though the Way be most delightful, we must go in God's Strength.

4. *The Tenour of the New Covenant puts this Point out of Doubt, that the Difficulties of Salvation are to be overcome by the Power of God's Grace only.* The Law (which is our Rule of Duty, and to be observ'd as such, by those that are in Christ) requires Things above our Strength, but God in this Covenant of Grace, Promises what he requires; and undertakes for what he demands. The Things which he enjoins us to do, he says, He will enable us to do; which plainly implies, that without his powerful help they could never be done; for, why should God vainly and needlessly engage to interpose in a Matter, which might be done as well, though he stood afar off, and contributed nothing towards it? Does God fear (as *Joab* intimated to *David* concerning *Rabbah*, when he fought against it, 2 Sam. 12. 28.) lest we should take the City, and so it should be called after our Name? I mean, does God fear, lest we should do all our selves, and so run away with all the Honour? No surely, God's Glory may be wickedly snatcht and stoln from him, but it can never be justly won or gotten by us; and therefore God's gracious Promises are convincing Arguments of Man's utter Impotency to any spiritual good; his Commands do not more plainly signify our Obligation to Duty, than his Promises do our Weakness in Discharging it. When God bids us walk in his Statutes, that shews how we are bound to do it; when he says, *he will Cause us to walk in them*, Ezek. 36. 27. This shows, that we are not able of our selves to do it.

IV. Use.

IV. Use. There are several Things which we may from hence be informed of, and exhorted to.

1. *There are some things which we may be informed of from hence. As*

1. *They make very light of Salvation, who think to work it out by their own Power.* They cannot suppose it to be a difficult Thing, but that which may be atchiev'd with little labour or trouble. And whereas the Principles of those who attribute all to the Grace of God are charg'd with countenancing of laziness and looseness, it may much rather be retorted upon those who hold the contrary Opinions. Such as ascribe all to themselves, are the Persons that take least Care and Pains in the Matters of Religion; as if God's Children were born without Travail, and the Kingdom of Heaven taken without Violence. Men that Judge after the Flesh, cannot indeed be imagin'd to Judge otherwise; *For the Eyes of our Understanding must be enlighten'd, that we may know what is the exceeding greatness of his Power, &c. Eph. 1. 18, 19.*

2. *Our spiritual Adversaries would find no Difficulty in destroying us, if we were left alone.* We have so little might against them, that we should be an easie Prey to them, if we had not one to stand by us, who is infinitely mightier than they. The Devils believe this Doctrine which the Pride of Man opposes; they know they can out-do and over-match us, if we had not Omnipotence on our side. When our Lord tells Peter, that Satan desired to have him, the mean-

ing is, that he would have tried a single Combat with him, unguarded by the powerful Intercession of Jesus Christ, for that was it which turn'd the Scale and prevented Peter's overthrow. Poor Believers are as much despis'd by the Powers of Darknefs, as Gideon's young Son was by the two Kings of Midian, Zelah, and Zalumnah, Judg. 8. 21. Job himself would not have come off with so much Honour and Victory as he did, if God had not put Strength into him, Chap. 23. 6.

3. *This hints the true Reason to us, how it comes to pass that the same Believers are baffled by some Difficulties, and yet Triumph over others. What hardships is a Child of God carried through, and made more than Conquerour over at one Time, who at another Time is almost overwhelm'd, and his Courage gone! How does God at one Time help us to bear the Enjoyment of greater Plenty without being hurt by it, than we can at another Time? As the Net which was let down at Christs Command broke with the multitude of Fishes, Luke 5. 6. And after the Resurrection, Christ orders the Draught as before, and so many were caught, that they could not pull them to the Shore, John 21. 6. And yet the Net was not broken, v. 11.*

4. *How vastly does Grace make us to differ from what we are by Nature! I am a Child, says the Prophet, Jer. 1. 6. Easily shaken and thrown down; but what says God, ver. 18. Behold I have made Thee this Day a fenced City, and an Iron Pillar and brazen Walls, &c. Without me you can do nothing, says Christ, John 15. 5. I can do all*

all Things through Christ that strengthens me, says Paul, Phil. 4. 13. What a Difference is here? So great, that there cannot be a greater; doing nothing, and doing all things. Such is a Difference between a forry naked Man, and a Believer obtaining help of God. Though our own Right Hand cannot save us, the Lord at our Right Hand will save, so as none shall hinder.

5. *The best Assistance we can give to any of our Brethren in Soul-troubles and straits, is leading them to the Rock, thats higher than our selves. We are vain helpers, except we do as Jonathan did to David, 1 Sam. 23. 16. Strengthen one another's Hands in God. 'Tis our Duty to Comfort the feeble-minded, and support the weak, 1 Thessl. 5. 14. But how shall we do this? By shewing them where the Strength of Salvation is. So the Prophet expounds the Apostle, Isa. 35. 3, 4. Strengthen you the weak Hands, confirm the feeble Knees; say to them that are of a fearful Heart, be strong, fear not; behold your God will come and save you. Holy David was very Ambitious of doing this Service to the World; viz. Shewing God's Strength to the Generation, and his Power to every one that was to come, Psalm 71. 18.*

2. *There are some Things which from hence we should be exhorted to. As*

1. *You who have liv'd all your Days in Sin, repair to Almighty Grace for Cure. The oldest Sores are heal'd by Christ, as well as the freshest Wounds. He is an able Physician, and*

though your Case would puzzle every one else, he will certainly recover you. Diseases of the longest Continuance, how stubborn soever, are easily helpt. and remov'd by him. *He loosed the Woman, whom Satan had bound eighteen Years, Luke 13. 16. He made the Man whole, that had an Infirmary thirty eight Years, John 5. 5.* His Miracles of Grace are wrought not only on Young Sinners, but many Times Elder Persons.

2. *When you are brought into a State of Salvation, think of the remainder of your Work without uncomfortable Terror.* The Difficulties in our Passage to Heaven oftentimes breed too much Affrightment; as the Soul of the People in their Journeying through the Wilderness to Canaan, was discouraged because of the Way, Numb. 21. 4. They had little Reason for this, whom God had already deliver'd out of Egypt; and the like may be said of you, whom God hath with a mighty and out-stretched Arm rescued from the very brink of Hell.

3. *Let Everlasting Strength be a Motive to your Everlasting Trust.* Isa. 26. 4. As Martha said to Christ concerning her Sister, *That had left her to serve alone; bid her that she help me,* Luke 10. 40. So do you boldly claim God's promised Assistance at the Throne of Grace, where you cannot be more (humbly) Confident, than Welcome. Intermitting of a steady Reliance upon him, is as much your Folly and Sin, as presuming on your selves. What can be meant by that Precept, of *being strong in the Lord, &c.* Eph. 6. 10. If we may not take hold
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of God's Strength, and use it as freely as if it were our own? While others faint, and are weary, and utterly fall, you that wait upon the Lord (i. e. continue depending) shall renew your Strength, Isa. 40. 30, 31.

4. Look upon it as your absolute Duty to despair of nothing that needs to be done either for or by you. Your own insufficiency is no Plea for doubting in any Case whatever. Let the weak say, *I am strong*, Joel 3. 10. Paul is our Pattern, he did say so, 2 Cor. 12. 10. The Spirit of God speaks in very large and comprehensive Terms upon this Subject, Col. 1. 11. *Strengthened with all might according to his glorious Power, unto all Patience, &c.* So 2 Cor. 9. 8. Here's a remarkable heap of Expressions (as Mr. Trail very well Notes, pag. 236.) All Grace first in God, and that abounding towards us; and then as the result of it, our having a sufficiency, and All-sufficiency, and that always, and in all Things, and thence flows every good Work, and our abounding to every good Work.

5. You who are Believers, and consequently to whom all Things are thus possible, study all thankfulness. What a Debtor is he to God, whose Strength is in him. According as his Divine Power hath given Relief to you, make suitable returns to him. The Man that had been Lame from his Mother's Womb, as soon as he receiv'd Strength and stood up, he entered with the Apostles into the Temple, leaping and praising God, Acts 3. 7, 8. Thus David cries out, *The Lord is my Strength, and my*

Shield, my Heart trusted in him, and I am helped; therefore my Heart greatly rejoiceth, and with my Song will I Praise him, Psalm 28. 7. To Conclude therefore, as your help comes from Heaven, so let your Praises go up thither. Remember every renewed Experience calls for a repeated Acknowledgement; and there may be equal Danger of obstructing God's mighty workings by ingratitude, and by unbelief; both tend to withhold his Hand, and enfeeble ours.

S E R.

SERMON XV.

December 1. 1696.

PSALM LXIX. iv. last Clause.

Then I restored that which I took not away.

THough the Title of this *Psalm* Points us to the Author [*a Psalm of David*] yet much of the Matter makes it plain, that he is not the only, nor the principal Subject. The main Substance of the whole agrees well enough to *David*, and he might have an Eye in it to his own personal Afflictions, but yet his Thoughts and Expressions were so directed by the Holy Ghost, as to be more fully and properly verified in Christ, of whom he was an eminent Type, than in himself. There are several Remarkable Passages which have a particular Respect to Christ, and to put it beyond all Doubt, that this was the meaning and design of the Spirit of God in them, they are so applied in the New Testament. Compare *ver.* 9. with *John* 2. 17. And *ver.* 21. with *Mat.* 27. 34. A Circumstance of Suffering which we
never

never meet with in the History of *David's* Troubles, but punctually Recorded by the Evangelists concerning our Blessed Lord. Again, *ver.* 22, 23. is applied, not to *David's* Enemies, but to the *Jews*, upon their Rejection by God, for the Crucifying of Christ, *Rom.* 11. 9, 10. and so *ver.* 25. is said to be fulfill'd in *Judas* for betraying him, *Acts* 1. 20. But we need to go no further for an Instance of this kind, than the beginning of this verse, which is Cited by our Lord himself, as spoken with Reference to his Case, *John* 15. 25. *They hated me without a Cause.* Only what is contracted in the Citation, is here deliver'd more at large, where we have four Things distinctly set forth, concerning the Enemies of Jesus Christ; their Iniquity, Malignity, Number and Power.

1. *Their Iniquity*; they were [*causeless haters of him*] and [*his Enemies wrongfully*] they had no just or real Ground for what they did, no Provocation to do it; they were his Adversaries for his good Works, not for any Evil ones; and that which should have rather engag'd their Affection to him, was the occasion of their Opposition.

2. *Their Malignity*; [*they that would destroy me*] they sought no less than his Life, they thirsted after his Blood; that which was indeed necessary to be shed, for the accomplishing of the Holy Ends of God, these wicked Instruments would not be Content without; so Devilish Rage was over-rul'd to bring about the Divine Purpose.

3. *Their Number*; they [*are more than the Hairs of my Head*] the whole Multitude of the *Jews* were for destroying him, *Mat.* 27. 20,
&c.

&c. And truly, every Man in the World, that is without Christ, is against him. He hath as many Adversaries, as there are Men in a natural unconverted State.

4. *Their Power.* They [*are mighty*] so it was foretold that they would be; *The Kings of the Earth set themselves, and the Rulers take Counsel together against the Lord, and against his Christ*, Psalm 2. 2. Which Peter cites, as spoken with Relation to our Lord Jesus, *Acts* 4. 26. Paul says, *That none of the Princes of this World knew him*, 1 Cor. 2. 8. And being ignorant of him, no wonder that they oppose him. Antichrist hath more of the Potentates of the Earth on his side, than Christ ever had. But that which I intend to insist upon, is what the Psalmist adds in the close of the verse. [*Then I restored that which I took not away*]. Then, when he was so beset and surrounded with Enemies, who were worrying him to Death; then, *when the Waters were come into his Soul; when he sunk in the deep mire, and the Floods overflow'd him; when his Throat was dried, and his Eyes failed*, ver. 1, 2, 3. Which are all so many various Phrases to denote the Extremity of those Soul-troubles that our Lord Jesus was plung'd into, by Reason of the Wrath of God let out against him, as well as the Wrath of Man. Then, *he restored that which he took not away*; he was not forc'd or constrain'd to do it, but he did it willingly with his free Consent; he was under no Obligation to do it, but what he took upon himself; the Law binds a Man indeed to make Restitution of that *which he hath taken away*, Lev. 6. 4. But the Lord of the Law could not be bound to restore that
which

which he had not taken, in order to the making of Peace and Reconciliation between God and the Sinner, this was graciously undertaken and perform'd by Christ.

Obf. It was the great and blessed Work of our Lord Jesus here upon the Earth, to restore what he took not away. In handling this,

I. Shew, what is it, which was taken away, and from whom?

II. Wherein it appears that Christ took it not away.

III. How he restor'd it.

IV. Why he did so.

V. Use.

I. *What is it which was taken away, and from whom?* For 'tis manifestly implied, that there was something unjustly taken, or else what need of any Restitution? As to God, there was Glory taken from him; and as to Man, there was Righteousness, Holiness and Happiness taken from him also.

1. *There was Glory taken from God.* Not his essential Glory, nor any Perfection of his Being, for that cannot be taken away, but that Glory which shines forth in the Moral Government of his Creatures, and that Glory, which we are tied to give to him.

1. *The Glory of God shining forth in the Holy Government of his reasonable Creatures, was taken away by Sin.* It was preserv'd and maintain'd in the upper World indeed, among the standing Angels, but among fallen Men in this lower World, it was intirely lost. It was for our
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Makers Honour, to have the Man whom he had made after his Image, live in perfect Subjection to his Will; but when Man cast off the Yoke of his Obedience, though God's Authority and Right remained, the exercise of it by actual rule was interrupted. He was a King still, but of disorderly Rebels, that instead of kissing his Scepter, renounc'd him, and bid defiance to him.

2. *That Glory which we are tied to give to God, was withheld by sin.* There is a revenue of Glory due from us to God, which sin tends to alienate, and deprive him of, and so the Devil takes the Advantage, and seizes it for himself. Every sin is upon this account a committing of Theft; 'tis robbing of God of the Honour which we owe to him. We ought to Glorifie him with all we have, with every Faculty and Member, but the Sinner on the contrary vilifies and reproaches him by the abuse of all. Such was and is the state of Mankind without Christ. We do not only come short of the Glory of God, but we attempt to cut his Glory short. As much as in us lies, we make God contemptible, throw Dirt upon his Name, and set him at nought.

2. *There was Righteousness, Holiness, and Happiness taken from Man also.* He was a real loser in all these respects, being once in possession of all, but cast out of it by sin.

1. *There was a loss of Righteousness to the Guilty Sinner.* So long as Adam stood, while his outward nakedness was no shame to him, he was inwardly cover'd with a Robe of Righteousness; but Satan alluring him into sin, strip'd him of his Garment, and cloath'd him with Confusion instead of it. As God made him in his first Estate
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he was a perfectly just Person; and could stand in the Judgment before God ; but when his Integrity was removed from him, Guilt was immediately contracted, and he fell into Condemnation, under the Sentence of the Law which he had broken. And now till Christ repairs this Loss for us, the Divine Tribunal is very dreadful ; *For in God's sight no man living can be justified*, Psal. 143. 2.

2. *There was a loss of Holiness to the polluted Sinner.* The Image of God in Man was defac'd, the Divine Nature destroyed, and all the Habits of Grace extinguish'd ; the good Treasure of the Heart was turned into an evil one, filled with the Seeds and Principles of all manner of Corruption. *Every one of them is gone back*, (degenerated from what they originally were, when they came out of God's Hands) *they are altogether become filthy*, Psal. 53. 3. Men are now by Nature so void of the least Relicks or Remembrances of their primitive Purity, that they are insensible of their present Defilement. They are so blinded with their own Mire, that they think themselves clean, till Christ hath anointed them with his Spirit and washed them in his Blood.

3. *There was a loss of Happiness to the miserable Sinner.* Adam's Expulsion out of an Earthly Paradise, though a real Punishment, was the least part of what Sin render'd him obnoxious to. The Misery of Man was much greater upon him in other Respects, as he was quite cut off from all Communion with God, made an Heir of Wrath, not only as to bodily, but spiritual Evils, of all sorts, and not only in Time, but to Eternity. Upright Man was exempt, and secure

cure from all these, and placed in as Happy a Condition as a Creature could be out of Heaven; but when Sin enter'd, Death enter'd with and by it, *Rom. 5. 12.* A Death which is comprehensive of all the Calamities and Woes of both Worlds; till Christ came that we might have more abundant Life.

II. *Wherein it appears that Christ did not take away those Things from either?*

1. *It is plain, as to God, he never took away any Glory from him; for he never did any Thing dishonourable or offensive to God. John 8. 29. I do always those Things that please him. So Isa. 50. 5. The Lord God hath opened mine Ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back.* Several of the Prophets did for a Time refuse to go at God's call, and would have pluckt their Shoulders, and shrunk their Necks, from the Work which he put upon them; as *Moses, Jeremý, Jonas, &c.* But our Lord Jesus shew'd no Reluctancy, delighting to do and suffer his Father's Will. The second *Adam* had none of that sinful Enmity in his Nature, which all the rest of the Posterity of the first *Adam* have; He was peculiarly *that Holy Thing*, from his very Birth, *Luke 1. 35.* God's beloved Son, and faithful Servant, throughout his Life.

2. *It is also clear as to Man, that he took not away any Righteousness, Holiness or Happiness from him.* He was not such a Fountain of Guilt, Pollution and Misery, as the first *Adam* had been, but the contrary (as we shall see afterwards.) The first Man poyson'd, and ruin'd all his Seed, but he did not so to the Children which God had given him. His Conversation was not only blame.

blameless, and harmless, but useful and exemplary. He did no Violence, *Isa.* 53. 9. *But he went about doing good*, *Acts* 10. 38. Whatever was injurious to Men, he vindicates himself from; *When the Disciples call'd for Fire from Heaven to consume the Samaritans*, he tells them, *that he came not to destroy men's Lives, but to save them*, *Luke* 9. 56. When the Woman taken in Adultery was brought to him, he would not condemn her, *but bids her go and Sin no more*, *John* 8. 11.

3. *The Scripture therefore speaks of Christ's being cut off, but not for himself*, *Dan.* 9. 26. Though he suffered in his own Person, he did not suffer on his own Account; *Christ bath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust*, *1 Pet.* 3. 18. Sin was indeed the cause of his Suffering, but not any sin committed by himself; he was the just One, we were the unjust, on whose behalf he underwent all that was laid upon him. *Isa.* 53. 4, 5. *Surely he bath born our Grievs, and carried our Sorrows.*—*He was wounded for our Transgressions, and bruised for our Iniquities.* He suffered for that of which we were guilty; he made reparation for the Wrongs which we had done; he discharged the Debts which we contracted, and endur'd the Wrath which we provoked, and drunk of the Cup which we had filled.

4. *The Innocency of Christ was conspicuous in his very Sufferings.* Though they found no cause of Death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain, *Acts* 13. 28. He that gave Sentence against him, did first give Sentence for him; he pronounc'd him Faultless on the Bench, before he deliver'd him up to Execution. When they went to apprehend him, they came out *as against a Thief*, *Matth.* 26. 55. they proceeded against him

him as a Malefactor, and numbred him with Transgressors, but could not prove any Article of their *Charge* against him, so much as by the agreeing Testimony of their Mercenary Perjured Witnesses. That which they alledged with greatest truth was, that *he made himself the Son of God*, John 19. 7. *i. e.* equal with God, as they understood it, chap. 5. 18. (However the *Soci-nians* would mince that Expression now) but this was far from a Criminal Accusation, or a warrantable Reason why he should die, as they pretended; *For being in the form of God*, (of the same infinite Essence) *he counted it no Robbery to be equal with God*, Phil. 2. 6.

III. *How did Christ restore those things which he took not away?*

Ans. *In General*, by his *Active and Passive Obedience*; for both are concern'd in this matter, and contribute their joint influence towards the great and blessed Work, of which I am now speaking. As will appear.

1. *Christ's doing of the Will of God in such a manner as he did it, was a greater Honour to God, than ever had been, or could be done before.* He did it in the most exact and sinless manner; the Law of God in his Heart, and copied out in his Actions, was as perfect as it is in it self. The Commandment, though exceeding broad, was not wider than his performance of it. This could never be said of any of the Sons of Men before, since the Fall of *Adam*; for there is still a large mixture of Evil with all the Good they do, and their best and compleat Duties will not bear weighing in an even Balance. And as to *Adam* himself, before he fell, in his state of

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Upright-

Uprightness, there was a vast disproportion between his Obedience, and the Obedience of Christ. What comparison between the service of a Day, and a whole Life ! What comparison between the Act of a Creature, and the Acts of the Son of God ! There was more Glory brought to God by his Son's being his Servant but for one moment, than by all the Angels in Heaven, and Men on Earth being so for ever.

2. *Christ's suffering of the Will of God, made a considerable addition to the Glory of God, which had been impaired by the sin of Man.* Hebr. 5. 8. *Tho' he were a Son, yet learned he Obedience by the things which he suffered.* This was admirable ; He that teaches Obedience to us, and requires it of us, learn'd it himself, and he learn'd it experimentally ; for to learn to obey, is to obey ; It was a Lesson which he practis'd, and it was an harder Lesson than in cases where he was only call'd to do, for it was by the things that he suffered. This he refers to in that last famous Prayer of his, *John 17. 4. I have glorified thee on the Earth, I have finish'd the Work, &c.* The finishing of his Work was by dying ; this crown'd all that he had done and undergone before, and therefore this was the most eminent and signal instance of his glorifying God. Therefore when Judas the Traytor was gone out, Christ breaks forth, *Now is God glorified in me ; now the hour is coming, John 13. 31.* Now all his Attributes, Precepts, Promises, Threatnings, are about to be made more illustrious by my Death, than ever they have been.

3. *Christ hath provided for the Justification of the Sinner, by the Obedience which he fulfilled.* By the Obedience of one shall many be made righteous, Rom.

Rom. 5. 8. Our Lord Jesus is this One, and Believers are those many; all sound and true Believers, whether strong or weak. One Christ is able to justify many; God hath declared, That what he hath done, is enough for this purpose, *Isa. 53. 11.* Yea it is more pleasing and satisfactory to God, than if every one of those many had done what the Law calls for from them in their own Persons. As Christ appear'd in Vision to *John*, with a Garment down to the Feet, *Rev. 1. 13.* so the Robe of his Righteousness is long and large enough to supply all the Defects of ours, and cover his whole Body. Here is a sufficient ample Recompence for our former loss; we gain a better in the room of what we had. The Righteousness which sin carried out, was a poor, mutable, temporary, fading thing; now an everlasting Righteousness is brought, in *Dan. 9. 24.* a Righteousness which cannot be taken away, or by any means wrested from us.

4. *Christ communicates that Grace, which is necessary for our Sanctification also.* He finds Sinners in their Blood, but he does not leave them so; he finds them without God, but brings them to him; he finds them afar off. but makes them nigh; he finds them haters of God, and one another, but he plants love to both in their Hearts by his own Spirit: He purifies them to himself, *Tit. 2. 14.* and forms himself in them. There are no partakers of Christ, but what partake of God's Holiness by him; they have no saving benefit from him, that are destitute of this; *Isa. 62. 12.* They shall call them, The holy People, the redeemed of the Lord. As Christ is the Author of Salvation to them that believe and obey him, so he is the Author of their Faith and their

their Obedience ; we receive Grace from him in order to the receiving of him, and walking in him. There is no spiritual good thing that dwells in us, but what is the effect of Christ's dwelling there. Souls that are united to his Person, are supplied out of his fullness ; and these are such Supplies as shall never fail, or be cut off, while we have a being.

5. *Jesus Christ hath merited for us a present Blessedness in this World.* This necessarily follows upon what hath been said ; for they that are already in a justified and sanctified State, must needs be in an happy State ; more happy upon these accounts, than they can be miserable upon any other. Where sin is taken away, as to its damning Guilt, and ruling Power, no afflictive Evils can make us miserable, but rather help to encrease our Happiness ; for the most uneasie Providences are so sanctified, that it is better than if they were escaped. 'Tis a Privilege which we owe to the Blood of Christ, that none of the Calamities of this Life shall hurt us, but all shall do us good ; and 'tis far more desirable to be kept in a Wilderness of Trouble under such a Promise, than to be in a Paradise of Prosperity without it. God deals with Believers as Children when he chastens them, with Sinners as Enemies when he shines upon them. *Christ hath redeemed us from the whole Curse*, Gal. 3. 13. from the Curse of temporal Afflictions, as well as everlasting Destruction. He was crowned with Thorns, as the Fruit of the Curse here upon the Earth, Gen. 3. 18. to shew that hath born it for us, and born it away from us.

6. *Jefus Chriſt hath procured for us a more full and abſolute Bleſſedneſs in the World to come.* This is what we had forfeited all hopes of, and title to ; but of him we have obtained this Inheritance again, *Ephes. 1. 11.* Believers are made happy now by the earneſt of it; hereafter they will be more unconceivably happy in the actual compleat poſſeſſion. *Whoſo eateth my Fleſh, and drinketh my Blood, bath eternal Life,* John 6. 54. Eternal Life and Glory, is the very top and uttermoſt point, the head Stone, and the full blown Flower of a Creature's Felicity ; when you have ſaid this, you can go no higher ; now to aſſure us the more comfortably of our arrival to this at laſt, we have the pledges and beginnings of it here ; but the way of our receiving them is to be conſider'd : 'Tis by *eating the Fleſh, and drinking the Blood of Chriſt* ; by Faith in the Lamb ſlain, in our Paſſover Sacrific'd ; for his Fleſh could not have been eaten, nor his Blood drunk, if he had not died. 'Tis the death of Chriſt which we muſt lay hold upon for Life and Salvation ; the Kingdom which he appoints to us, is founded here ; for (as one ſays) *Chriſt hath purchaſed by his Death all the Legacies bequeath'd in his Teſtament, which no other Teſtator does.*

IV. *Why did Jeſus Chriſt make it his Work to reſtore what he took not away ?*

1. *It was a neceſſary work, a work which muſt be done, in order to his being a Saviour.* God will have reſtitution made one way or another ; his injur'd Name and Honour muſt be vindicated. *It became him, &c. in bringing many Sons unto glory* (yea it would have become him, if he had

brought but one) *to make the Captain of our Salvation perfect through sufferings*, Hebr. 2. 10. It was agreeable to his Wisdom, Purity, Truth, and Righteousness, that Jesus Christ should make compensation by his Blood for the Iniquity of Man. It was not fit, nor consistent with the Perfections of Gods Nature, that such Indignities as Sinners had offer'd, should be pass'd by altogether unpunish'd, without any notice taken, or revenge inflicted. Divine Mercy cannot be exercis'd to the disparagement of any other Attribute, he cannot exalt one to the depressing of the rest. In the business of Salvation, there was something else to be done, besides the magnifying of Grace; God had said, that *he would magnifie the Law, and make it honourable*, Isa. 42. 21. This Law had been trampled on by every Child of Disobedience, and therefore to assert and recover the Reputation of it, Christ must be made under it, perform what it enjoin'd, and suffer what it threatned.

2. *It was a work impossible for any meer Creature to do; so that if Christ did not, it could not have been done by any Person besides him.* The Scripture speaks of the wicked Oppressor, that he shall vomit up what he swallows down, *and according to his substance shall the restitution be*, Job 20. 18. He shall refund to those whom he hath drained by Rapine and Violence, as far as his Estate will go. But what restitution can there be, when all the substance is wasted? This is our case; we are wretchedly poor, and insolvent, and have nothing to pay, being reduc'd by Sin to absolute Beggary; we have stoln away (as far as was in our power) the Crown from God, and we have rifled and plunder'd our selves, encroach'd upon the

the Rights of Heaven, and wrong'd our own Souls, and are utterly incapable of making the least attonement for all this. We can take away, but we cannot restore : When the Servant that owed Ten thousand Talents to his Lord, was brought before him, and could not pay his Debt, his Lord commanded him to be sold, *Matth.* 18. 25. but alas ! we are not worth so much as our Debt amounts to. If Justice should seize us, it must detain us for ever ; we must not only be cast into Prison, but kept there ; and our lying in Hell for ever would not satisfy God, as Christ's suffering once upon the Cross.

SER.

SERMON XVI.

December 15. 1696.

PSALM LXIX. iv. last Clause.

Then I restored that which I took not away.

3. **J**esus Christ was ordained of God to this work, and in that respect there was a necessity of his accomplishing it. John 9. 4. *I must work the work of him that sent me, &c.* This was the work of him that sent him, and therefore he could not decline it. Christ could not resist the Will of the Father, any more than he could cease to love him. John 14. 31. *That the World may know that I love the Father, as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do.* His Obedience was an Evidence of his Love to God, as it is of ours; though there be no proportion between his and ours; for no Creatures love to God was ever so strong, or ever so tried. Cyrus was styled the Man that executed God's Counsel, Isa. 46. 11. but he did it ignorantly, for he knew not God; but the Man Christ Jesus understood his Work, and who gave it him to do, and design'd the Execution

Execution of God's Counsel in it; as an Expression of his matchless Affection to him. It became our Lord Jesus in the quality of God's Commissioner, *To be faithful to him that appointed him*, Heb. 3. 2. He was put in trust with this Business, and he must shew his Fidelity in performing it. There is such an exact Agreement between his and the Father's Will, that when God pleas'd to require his Service, he could not but say, *Lo I come*.

4. *Christ had engag'd to take this Work upon him; which is a sort of Engagement that the Scripture, more than once expresses by striking Hands*, Job 17. 3. Prov. 22. 26. So our Lord Jesus had covenanted with the Father before all Time, to do that which in the fulness of Time he actually came to do. Now this Agreement, which bears an Eternal Date, could not be disannulled or made void again; as God the Father had sworn with respect to Christ, and could not repent, Psalm 110. 4. So Jesus Christ having enter'd into such a Bond, it stood firm as the Ordinances of Heaven, and he could not go back from the Execution or Performance of it. If the Covenant of Redemption might have been broken, the whole Design might have miscarried, the Counsel of Peace had been overthrown, and all the Thoughts of God to us-ward had come to nothing. It was upon this unmoveable Foundation, that the Salvation of all the Believers under the Old Testament was built, as well as those under the New; so that if Christ had not made good what he undertook, they that were let into Heaven, must have been cast out. But the Confidence that God reposed in his Son could not be so defeated. *He that sweareth to his own hurt*

hurt and changeth not, is the Character of a Citizen of *Sion*, Psalm 15. 4. But most eminently true of Christ.

5. *The Infinite Love of Christ to Sinners did sweetly incline him to this Work. His Delights (who was the Wisdom of God) were with the Sons of Men*, Prov. 8. 31. He delighted in Mercy, and in them as the needy Objects of it, who otherwise were altogether undelightful. The Bowels of Jesus Christ were troubled for us; he could not bear to see his whole reasonable Creation in this lower World, made a Prey to the Devil, without interposing for the effectual Rescue of a chosen peculiar Number. Our Misery was the Motive to his Compassion; that swayed him to Acts of Pity, when our guilt would have provokt him to the utmost Revenge. *This is that Love of Christ which passeth Knowledge*, Eph. 3. 19. A Love which is and will be the Matter of endless Admiration, which the Saints in Heaven are always magnifying, but can never fully comprehend. 'Tis sometimes called *the Grace of our Lord Jesus*, 2 Cor. 8. 9. 1 Tim. 1. 14. Which is not meant of the Grace communicated to us, but that Grace in him, which is the Fountain and Spring of all such Communications. We are not only to consider the Love and Good-will of the Father in sending, but the exceeding Kindness of the Son in coming; which his Desire of, and Zeal for our Salvation, promoted him to.

6. *Jesus Christ was willing not only to purchase a new Title for us to our forfeited Blessings, but to purchase a new Title to us for himself.* This is expressly said to be one Part of his Intention and Design; Rom. 14. 9. *To this end he both dyed,*
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and rose and revived, that he might be Lord both of the Dead and Living. He was Lord of all upon the old Account of Creation, for he could not lose his Propriety and Dominion; when *Abaz*. Reign'd so wickedly and committed all manner of Abominations, and for that Reason was delivered into the Hand of the King of Syria, the Lord his God is said to do it, *2 Chron.* 28. 5. The Lord was his God by right still, though he sinfully renounc't and disown'd him. But now. Jesus Christ was resolv'd to be our Lord upon a new Account of Redemption; that he might lay claim to us, not only as the Lord that made us, but as the Lord that bought us. *We are now the ransomed of the Lord, Isa.* 35. 10. *His purchased Possession, Eph.* 1. 14. By the Payment of the same inestimable Price he hath regain'd all that Sin and Satan had snatcht and torn from us, and likewise acquir'd a further Interest and Right in us, such as will be acknowledg'd by all his sav'd ones to his Eternal Praise.

7. *The Powers of Darknes would have been Triumphant, if Christ had not baffled and defeated them by this glorious Performance.* It was a great Satisfaction to their Malice and Rage, after they were banisht out of Heaven, and cast down to Hell, to involve all Mankind by one successful Temptation in the same Ruine with themselves, and so prevent God from rejoycing in any of his Works on Earth. When Judgment was executed upon them never to be revers't, they thought it made some amends, that they had drawn the whole Posterity of *Adam* at once into the fatal Snare. The Devil gloried over poor miserable Man as his Conquer'd

quer'd Vassal, and lawful Captive; having subdued this undone World to himself, as a kind of Tributary Province, where he might Drink his fill of the Blood of Souls. But this Performance of Christ hath disappointed him of the Fruits of that Victory: *For he hath divided the spoil with the Strong, Isa. 53. 12. And destroyed him that had the Power of Death, Heb. 2. 14.* Jesus Christ hath pluckt his Sheep out of the Teeth of the Devourer, and pull'd down the Banners which he had set up, and made him give up his Slaves, as the Fish that had swallowed *Jonah*, vomited him alive upon dry Land.

8. *Christ knew that his blessed Performance would not only be a Benefit to Man, but turn to the Advantage of Elect Angels also.* At the same Time that he came about restoring Work for us, he might also do confirming Work for them. And this their Case requir'd; Angels wanted an Head of stability, as well as Men a Mediator of recovery; they stood in need of his Support, as well as we of his Salvation; his Blood was necessary for us as actually fallen, his Strength necessary to them, because naturally mutable. *All Things in Heaven and Earth, were to be gather'd together in one, even in Christ, Eph. 1. 10.* They could not safely meet in any other Center, but so as to be in danger of being shaken off again. We that had lost our first Estate, were to be reduc'd and brought back to it; they that had kept their first Estate were to be fixt and establisht in it. Here was a double Work to be done by the same Hand; and the same Hand hath done both; Christ hath interpos'd for our Restauration, and for their Security; for the remedying of our Apostacy,

stacy, and the Prevention of theirs. The Heart of our dear Lord is set upon the multiplying of Acts of Grace, from the Throne to the Footstool, that high and low may be taken in.

V. Use.

I. *Information.* Many Things to be learnt from hence. As,

1. *If it were Christs Work to restore what he took not away, we may see a vast difference between him, and the best of those that were Types of him.* Some of the greatest Types of Christ were in some Things contrary to him, as well as in all Things Inferiour. There was not a more eminent Type of Christ in the Old Testament, than *David*, the Person speaking in the Text, insomuch that Christ is frequently set forth under his Name, *Isa.* 55. 3. and in many other Places. Now this *David* was so far from doing as Christ did, *i. e.* Restoring what he took not away, that he confesses the contrary of himself, in the Case of his numbring the People, for which seventy Thousand of them dyed by the Pestilence, *2 Sam.* 24. 17. *He spake unto the Lord, when he saw the Angel that smote the People, and said, Lo I have sinned and done wickedly, but these Sheep what have they done? Let thy Hand I pray thee, be against me, &c.* Our Lord Jesus might have inverted these Words; these Sheep have gone Astray indeed, and turned every one to his own Way, but what have I done? Let not thy Sword be awaken'd against me, but them. They have deserv'd to suffer, but wherein have I offended? *David's* Sin punisht upon the People, and the Sins of the People upon Christ.

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2. *The unspotted Holiness of our Lord Jesus, is not in the least blemisht by the Imputation of our Sins to him.* He is not at all the less guiltless in himself, because our Iniquities are laid upon him. We may with sufficient tenderness preserve the Honour of our great Redeemer, as one undefiled, and separate from Sinners, without departing from this important Truth of his being made Sin for us; for the Holy Ghost affirms both this, and that he *knew no Sin*, in the same Breath, *2 Cor. 5. ult.* He was far from being personally conscious of Sin, yet so far charg'd with it, as to be accountable in our stead for it. When the Scape-goat which had all the Iniquities of the People put upon his Head, was sent away by the Hand of a fit Man into the Wilderness, *He that let him go, was to wash his Cloaths; and bath his Flesh in Water, and afterwards to return into the Camp, Lev. 16. 26.* And so the Priest was to do, after the sprinkling of the Blood of the Heifer, *Numb. 19. 7.* And the man that burnt her, ver. 8. To signify a reputed uncleanness, though there was none really inherent. One of the Ancients (*Augustine*) applies the Words following the Text, ver. 5. to Christ in this very Sense; they were his Sins as he bore them, though he did not commit them.

3. *This serves to clear and vindicate the Righteousness of God in his severe dealing with Christ.* His engaging to restore, made the Case the same, with respect to the Equity of the Divine Dispensation, as if he had taken away. He undertook as our Surety, and so the Debt was lookt upon as his own, though if you abstract from the Consideration, of his Suretiship, he owed nothing. As *Judah* said to *Jacob*, when he

he intreated that his Brother *Benjamin* might be sent with them to *Egypt*; *I will be Surety for him, of my Hand shalt thou require him; if I bring him not to thee, let me bear the blame for ever*; Gen. 43. 9. So Christ undertook for the Sinner to God; at my Hand shalt thou require all that is due from him; let my Life go for his Life, let my Blood be taken in the Room of his, and accepted as a Ransom for him. Now the Case being so, though God spared not his own Son, he was not unjustly rigorous. His Son acquits and justifies him in all that he inflicted on him; Psalm 22. 1, 2, 3. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, &c. But thou art Holy. So John 17. 25. He gives him the Title of righteous Father.

4. This shews the Reason of Christ's Silence, when he was upon his Trial, at the Bar of Men. Mark 15. 3, 4, 5. The Chief Priests accused him of many Things, but he answered nothing. And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? Behold how many Things they witness against thee. But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled. It was strange and astonishing to him who knew not the Cause, and might well be so. There are various Reasons assign'd for it, it was foretold that he should be oppressed and afflicted, and yet be Dumb and not open his Mouth, like a Lamb brought to the slaughter, Isa. 53. 7. He would do nothing to hinder his own Death, when his Hour was come; but I conceive the main Reason to be, that he stood in our Place, who were truly guilty, tho' he was Innocent; our Mouths were stopped, Rom. 3. 19. And therefore he would not open his, as he could have done; our Cause was such as could not

not be pleaded, it was capable of no Defence; we had nothing to say, why Sentence should not pass upon us; and therefore he as representing us, silently submitted to Condemnation.

5. *This also intimates the Reason of the unshaken Confidence of Christ in the worst part of all his Sufferings and Desertions.* He knew, that he had not personally deserv'd them, and could not be always put to undergo them. If he had taken away, what he came to restore, it would have struck a fearful damp upon his Spirit, when he enter'd into those Clouds, and was drinking of the bitter Cup. Guilt breeds a great deal of Terror and Diffidence in the Mind, so that a Man knows not how to bear up under his Troubles, nor yet to expect an escape out of them. But our Lord Jesus having only the Chastisement of our Peace upon him, and being to make Expiation for no faults but ours, had no Fears or Doubts to make him stagger; his Faith never faulter'd, but held on in the most vigorous Exercise to the very Last. He could boldly make those challenges, which the Prophet does in writing of him, *Who will contend with me? Let us stand together; who is my Adversary? Let him come near to me,* Isa. 50. 8. He knows what Grounds he suffer'd upon, and what would be the Issue of his Sufferings; that the Prince of the World had nothing in him, and Death could not have long Dominion over him.

6. *If Christ hath made Restitution, then Remission is unquestionably sure.* Sin hath been Condemned in the Flesh of Christ, therefore the Believer must be certainly absolved. God is as righteous now in forgiving, as he would have been

been otherwise in punishing. He can do it now without any Impeachment of his Justice, Violation of his Truth, or Reflection on his Holiness; yea all these Attributes sway him to forgive; because there is full Satisfaction made, all his Demands are answer'd, and he can exact no more; Payment is accepted, the Surety is discharg'd and taken from Prison, and so your Indemnity infallibly obtain'd on the most honourable Terms. The Believer's Sins are therefore as surely blotted out, as the Unbelievers are written down. 'Tis observ'd by some, *That the Trumpet of the Jubilee was order'd to begin to sound on the Day of Atonement, and then every Man had his Liberty, and return'd to his Possession, Lev. 25. 9, 10.* So hath Christ by his atoning Sacrifice proclaim'd our Release. The Scape-goat sent into the Wilderness, never came back; but (as some say) thrown off from a steep Rock, and notice given by blowing of Horns throughout the Land. The Gospel gives the like comfortable Notice to us, that Christ hath absolutely procur'd our Pardon, and Sin once pardon'd, shall never be remember'd against us.

II. Exhortation.

1. *Let none rest contented without Christ.* They that can be satisfied in the want of him, never consider what he came about, and of what Concernment that is. When God calls for his Dues, and proceeds in a legal Manner against you (as he will do, *for you are under the Law, if not under Grace*) How will you render them to him? Or where will you borrow? Who can lend you so vast a sum, as is requisite to be

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laid down? Whither can you fly for help, above or below, in Heaven or Earth. To which of the Saints will you turn? Who among them all can by any means redeem his Brother? They will tell you, that they have not enough for themselves, they must have perisht without relief from Christ, as well as you, what a dreadful reckoning will it be, when the Books are open'd, the whole score cast up, and all your Arrears strictly enquir'd into? When instead of appeasing God by sufficient Restitution, you must look to be repaid by him with implacable Fury? Bethink your selves of your Condition, all you that are far from Righteousness: Think what it is, *For your Iniquities to be before the Lord continually*, Psalm 109. 15. Whereas by coming to Christ, *They would be all removed in one Day*, Zech. 3. 9.

2. *Take heed of detracting from Christ, who does so much for you.* He that repairs all our Losses for us, will not give the Glory of it to us, and woe be to us, if we assume the least Part of that Glory to our selves. 'Tis Honour enough to us to be free Receivers, but 'tis a disparagement to Christ, if we presume in any Respect to be rightful Purchasers. This is to commit a piece of unpardonable Theft, to add to all our other Violences. When God hath raised up such an *Horn of Salvation for us*, Luke 1. 69. Shall we say, *That we have taken to us Horns by our own Strength?* Amos 6. 13. Is the Iniquity of our heels too little for us, that we must back it with such Pride of Heart? Hath the Work of Faith any Vertue or Power in it self to justify, or is it the Dignity of the Object, that Faith lays hold upon? Does our New Obedience
make

make any recompence to God for our Old Sins? Does any Man in the common Affairs of humane Life imagine to clear himself from former Debts, by paying those of a later Date? Is our Repentance any Reparation for our Offence? That's the Duty of a sinful Creature, without the help of any new (suppos'd) Law to make it so; Light of Nature teaches, that 'tis a Sin to detain what hath been wrongfully taken, *Job 20. 10.*

3. *Let all that have Christ, be excited to Glory in him.* 'Tis that which they not only may, but ought to do, *Isa. 45. ult.* The humbling sight of Sin should not hinder or lessen our Holy Rejoycing in his Salvation. It becometh every one that believeth in Jesus, to lift up his Face without Fear, and without Confusion; Christ hath Pray'd against it; *ver. 6. of this Psalm, Let not them that wait on Thee oh Lord, be ashamed for my sake, &c.* If there be any Cause of shame remaining to a Believer (as a Believer) Christs Work must be imperfect, and the reproach will lye at his Door. 'Tis a part of our gratitude to Christ to commend him to the World, *as one mighty to save.* Thus *he is daily to be praised,* *Psalm 72. 15.* As he did not hide God's Righteousness within his Heart, so neither must we, *Psalm 10. 10.* Our Tongues are to Publish his Righteousness, and make honourable mention of it, *Psalm 71. 16.* It is not more our Priviledge to be invested with it, than 'tis our Duty to confess it, and to take all fit occasions of magnifying him for it.

4. *Remember your increased Obligations of faithful Subjection to Christ.* It would be vilely disingenuous; and inexcusably Presumptuous to take

encouragement from this Doctrine to run up new scores. They that can be guilty of such ill behaviour towards Christ, and wax so wanton against him, shew plainly, that they have no real Part in him. *He that hath not the Spirit of Christ is none of his*; Rom. 8. 9. And does this kind of Carriage discover any Thing of the Spirit of Christ? No surely, but on the contrary, the Spirit of the Devil, who would stain the Glory of our Holy Redeemer, by setting him forth as the Minister of Sin. God will not bear such abominable filth upon the Foundation of his laying; even a Man would not suffer his Kindness to be so perverted and abus'd, but express his just Repentment of it. If we Sin through weakness, we have an Advocate ready, but if we Sin wilfully, there is no more Sacrifice to be offer'd; confident Debtors that Care not how they Live, nor what they spend, are not to be countenanc'd; those Bankrupts whom Christ hath once reinstated, are made very Cautious afterwards.

5. *Learn not to Repine at any of your deserved Chastenings.* Stragglings Sheep can have no Reason to complain, when they pass under the Rod, considering how the good Shepherd was smitten. How can such dry Trees as we are fly in God's Face, when he is hewing of us with gentle strokes, if we did but bear upon our Minds, how the Green-Tree was cloven in sunder! Know thou that God *exaltest of thee less than thine Iniquity deserveth*, Job 10. 6. Thy Afflictions are moderate, and God deals with thee in Mercy, rather than in Judgment; and thou hast need of these Things to bridle or reclaim thee, but our Lord Jesus was more roughly

ly handled, who was worthy of the highest Expressions of Love, and never could be cast out of the Bosom of the Father. Christ was not indebted to the Justice of God, and therefore Typified by an Heifer upon which no Yoke ever came, Numb. 19. 2. And yet how was he prosecuted at the suit of Heaven it self! Therefore when God deals so favourably with us real Offenders (as he does indeed at the worst, if we compare our Sufferings with Christ's) we should lay our Hand upon our Mouths, and calmly bear his restrained Indignation.

6. *Follow the steps of Christ, by being meek and patient as he was, under the sharpest Exercises from causeless Enemies.* The having of Truth and Justice on our side will not warrant unruly Clamour and Contention. 'Tis much better in many Cases for a Man to give up his own Right, than to behave himself unseemly in the Defence of it, so as utterly to break the Bond of Peace, and stain the Credit of his Christian Profession. The Church of *Corinth* was therefore condemn'd for going to Law before the Unbelievers, for the smallest Matters; and the Apostle puts it to them; *Why do you not rather take wrong, and suffer your selves to be defrauded?* 1 Cor. 6. 7. 'Tis one of the glories of Christ's Disciples to lye down with quietness under the worst of Injuries from unreasonable Men, when they cannot regularly help them, *i. e.* without Sin and Scandal. In the Case of our good Name (which is more valuable than great Riches) when Things are laid to our Charge which we know not, there ought to be an asserting of our Innocence indeed, but yet a bearing of Reproach; we should disown the

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guilt, and yet submit to the dishonour. Thus Job would not remove his Integrity, nor let go his Righteousness (Chap. 27. 5, 6.) and yet says, That if his Adversary had written a Book, he would take it on his Shoulder, and bind it as a Crown to him, Chap. 31. 35, 36. This is to imitate the Temper and Practise of our Blessed Lord, who readily restor'd what he took not away.

S E R.

SERMON XVII.

February 23. 1697.

GAL. IV. vi.

*And because ye are Sons, God hath sent forth
the Spirit of his Son into your Hearts,
crying, Abba, Father.*

THE main design of this Epistle is to obviate the dangerous insinuations of the false Teachers, who had crept into the Churches of Galatia, and vehemently urged Circumcision, and the keeping of the Law, as necessary to Mens Justification and Salvation. The beginning of this Chapter is particularly levelled against this Principle; for here the Apostle shews that the abolished Ceremonies of the former Dispensation were properly suited to their minority and infant State, which required Instruction in spiritual Mysteries by carnal Resemblances, but that now Christ by his actual appearance in humane Flesh, had obtain'd our Freedom from all those Yokes, and put us into a fuller possession of the Rights of Children, even of such as are come to Age, and grown up to riper Years. This is the point which he is pursuing in the

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Text.

Text; *And because you are Sons, &c.* or to prove that you are Sons, and dealt with accordingly.

In which words we have something premised, and laid as a Foundation, and some things proposed as the Effects and Consequences of it.

1. *Something premised and laid as a Foundation, [Because you are Sons.]* Here the Adoption of Believers is positively asserted, as a thing in present possession. There are indeed some further Fruits of our Adoption, yet future and expected; so the Redemption of our Bodies from the Grave at the end of the World, is stiled the Adoption which we wait for, *Rom. 8. 23.* because the Resurrection to Glory will be an eminent declaration of our Adoption, as Christ was declared to be the son of God with power, by his rising from the dead, *chap. 1. 4.* but still our Adoption it self is not deferr'd till then; the Scripture affirms the contrary, *1 John 3. 2. Beloved, now we are the sons of God.* So in this Epistle, *chap. 3. 26. You are all the Children of God by Faith in Christ Jesus.* As soon as we come home to God by believing, we are taken into this Relation; for the Household of Faith is his select peculiar Family.

2. *Some things proposed as the Effects and Consequences of this;* partly with reference to the Act of God the Father, and partly with reference to the Act of the Spirit.

1. *As to what concerns the Act of the Father, who is plainly meant in that Clause; [God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts.]* Here we may consider the Person spoken of, the act respecting this Person, and the Objects that have the benefit of this Act.

1. *The Person spoken of; The Spirit of his Son; i. e. the Spirit of Christ.* So he is call'd *Rom.* 8. 9. *1 Pet.* 1. 11. This Character is given him on this occasion for various reasons.

1st. *Because 'tis the same Spirit which was in Christ, and which is in all Believers.* That one Spirit which abode upon him, resteth upon them also. Though he had a greater Fullness of the Spirit, yet they in their measure are filled with him too.

2dly. *By the effectual Operation of this Spirit, Christ is formed in us, and we conformed to him.* He fashions the whole Church of the First-born into the lively Similitude of God's only begotten.

3dly. *To intimate Christ's procurement of this Blessing for us. We were predestinated to the Adoption of Children by Christ,* *Ephes.* 1. 5. Election is attributed to the Father, but the Son is the Purchaser of what we are elected to. Hence he is said to give power (or right) to become the Sons of God to them that receive him, *John* 1. 12. and 'tis by virtue of our union to him that we recover our lost relation to God; all the Children of God are given to Christ, written in his Book, and ransom'd by his Blood; for he redeem'd us, that we might receive the Adoption of Sons, *ver.* 5. of this Chapter.

4thly, *To teach us, that the Spirit it self is procured for us by Christ.* They that have not the Spirit, are such as have not the Son; for an Interest in the one, does infallibly carry along with it a participation of the other. Those Rivers of living Water, by which the effusion of the Spirit is express'd, flow out of his pierc'd side: The Holy Ghost had never been sent down from

from Heaven, if the Son of God had not descended first to prepare his way.

2. *The Act respecting this Person.* God hath sent forth. The same word is used with respect to the Son, *ver.* 4. this act is ascribed to God several times in Scripture, *Psal.* 104. 30. *John* 14. 26. and it imports not any change of place, as if he were more distant from the Father when he is thus sent, than he was before (for he is Omnipresent, *Psal.* 139. 7. and of the same undivided Essence with the Father) but it notes only his Commission for some special Work in and upon the Creature.

3. *The Objects that have the Benefit of this Act;* Into your Hearts; *i. e.* into the Hearts of them that believe. Two things are signified by this;

1. *That the Work here intended, is an inward Work:* *Ezek.* 36. 27. *I will put my Spirit within them.* And therefore 'tis secret, and does not minister to Vain-glory, or carnal Boasting. The Testimony of the Spirit is privately given between him and us; and the new Name is that which no Man knows, but the receiver himself.

2. *'Tis a saving Work.* The Residence of the Spirit is appointed not in the Brain, by common un sanctified Gifts, such as Hypocrites may be endowed with, but in the Heart, where all the Habits of Grace are planted, and from whence all the Issues of Life proceed.

2dly. *As to what concerns the Act of the Spirit, [Crying, Abba, Father.]* Here we may examine how the Spirit is said to cry in our Hearts, and what it is which he does cry.

1. *How is the Spirit said to cry in our Hearts, when he is sent forth into them?* *Ans.* Even as God

God is said to know, when he makes others know; *Deut.* 13. 3. So the Spirit maketh intercession for us, *Rom.* 8. 26. in helping us to Pray for our selves; and therefore 'tis a vain and feeble Argument which some Socinians would bring from this and the like Texts against the Deity of the Holy Ghost. *Matth.* 10. 20. *It is not you that speak, but the spirit of the Father that speaketh in you: i. e.* Though your Tongues utter words, yet they could not do it without his assistance and direction, as the principal necessary Cause; As in this Epistle, *chap.* 2. 20. *I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.* The Apostle corrects himself, not as if he were not the true and proper Subject of spiritual Life, but to shew that Jesus Christ was the Spring and Fountain of it. So here the Spirit sent forth into our Hearts is said to Cry, because they cry through his gracious Influence. The Holy Ghost teaches us to pray, but strictly it is we that pray in the Holy Ghost, *Jude* 20.

2. *What is it which the Spirit does cry? Abba, Father; i. e.* Father, Father. This Repetition may be upon two accounts,

1. *To intimate that both Jews and Gentiles are equal sharers in this Blessing of Adoption; Therefore the Apostle makes use of two Words in two different Tongues to express the same thing.* *Abba* being a Syriack word, which was a Language then commonly known among the Jews, and that which we render Father, being a Greek word, which was a Language then commonly used among the Gentiles. Though a Learned Critick (*Capellus Spicileg.*) hath taken much pains to prove that *Abba* is a Greek word also, and so applied by the Apostle in this place, alluding to the

the manner of little Children, when they first begin to speak and call after their Parents, which in all Languages, as well as the *English*, is nearest to the same sound with this word, *Abba*.

2. *To note the strength and vehemency of desire.* The doubling of words does frequently signify this in Scripture. Our Lord, in the Garden, when he offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crys and tears, (as the Apostle speaks, *Heb. 5. 7.*) makes use of those very words, so repeated, *Mark 14. 36. Abba, Father, take away this cup from me.* So on the Cross, *My God, my God, &c.* So when *Elijah* was caught up, *Elisha* saw it, and cry'd, *My Father, my Father, &c.* *2 Kings 2. 12.* And the foolish Virgins that came when the Door was shut, cry'd, *Lord, Lord, &c.* *Matth. 25. 11.* All which Passages speak a passionate and extraordinary concernment of Soul.

There are several things which may be learned from hence, which I shall but mention, tho' seasonable enough in an Age so much corrupted by the revival and industrious Propagation of old Errors.

As, 1. *That there are Three Sacred Persons in the Blessed Godhead, the Father, Son, and Spirit; all of them held forth to us at one view, in the compass of this single Verse, yea in that single Clause, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son.*

2. *The Spirit is not a Quality, or Operation, but a Person that hath a true and real subsistence of himself; else this Phrase of being sent forth, could not agree to him.*

3. *This Spirit proceeds both from Father and Son; for he is sent by the Father, and he is the Spirit of the Son. There is an Order among the Divine Persons, though no priority of Being,*

ing; and according to that Order there is an ineffable myſterious Communication from the Firſt and Second Perſon to the Third. But the chief thing is this:

Obſ. *The great Gospel Privilege of a Believer's Sonſhip is not only diſcern'd, but improv'd by the help of the Spirit of Chriſt.*

Here, I. Shew that a Believer's Sonſhip is a great Privilege.

II. That it is a Gospel Privilege.

III. How this is diſcern'd by the help of the Spirit.

IV. How improved by his help.

V. Uſe.

I. *To ſhew, That a Believer's Sonſhip is a great Privilege.* This will appear in ſix things.

1. *'Tis a Privilege of God's everlaſting Kindneſs; which is more durable, and therefore more valuable than Life it ſelf.* The Favour of God is never wholly withdrawn from thoſe that are once his Children by Adoption. Goodneſs ſhall ſurely follow them all their Days, and continue towards them to Eternity. Earthly Parents may abandon, and be alienated from their own natural Off-ſpring, but God will not, yea cannot forget them. *A Son abides in the Houſe always,* John 8. 35. he ſhall not be diſinherited, nor turned out of doors, nor the entail of Covenant Bleſſings be cut off from him. He is brought into a Relation which ſhall not be deſtroyed, and dignified with a Name which ſhall never be blotted out. If God is pleaſed to Adopt us, 'tis certain that he hath loved us from the beginning, and will to the end.

2. *'Tis*

2. 'Tis inseparably attended with regenerating Grace. Both these Privileges of Adoption and Regeneration, do constantly go hand in hand. There is a real and a relative change together. As the Fathers of our Flesh communicate not only their Names, but Natures to us, so here is a new Birth, as well as a new Title. When God calls us into this honourable State, he begets us of his own Will; and at the same time that we contract such an Alliance to him, we are also born of him, *John 1. 13.* It would be a far less Privilege to be a Child of God, if there were not a Divine renewing in the Spirit of our minds connected with it. To remain upon the dead stock of the old *Adam* still, is a miserable Curse which would mar the Blessing; but thanks be to God it is not so.

3. *The Sons of God are under the Exercise of sparing mercy.* There is a sweetness in the Compellation of Father, which agrees to the tenderness of God in dealing with his Children, *Mal. 3. 17. I will spare them as a Man spareth his own Son that serveth him.* He does not mark their Iniquities, nor revenge them as he might. He does not reckon with them for every Offence, nor rebuke them for any in hot displeasure. He does not strike them with an Arm like God, but chastens them with the Rod of Men. His free Compassion overcomes his deserved Severity; he would be just in doing, what, out of indulgent pity, he leaves undone. How many wandrings of theirs does he pass over? what abatements does he make, when sin is visited upon them? and how gently doth he lift them up, after he hath cast them down?

4. *They*

4. *They are Objects of a peculiar Providence ; both in respect of Care, by preserving them from Ill, and, in respect of Bounty, by supplying them with Good.*

1. *In respect of Care, by preserving them from Evil. His Children have a place of Refuge, Prov. 14. 26. such an one as others have not. They whom God takes as his own, are received into his Almighty Protection, which the rest of the World can have little ground to hope for. To such the Promise belongs, and to such only ; He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust, Psal. 91. 4. what a Charge did David give to all his Officers concerning his Son, (though at that time in Rebellion) Beware that none touch the young man Absalom, 2 Sam. 18. 12. God is more solicitous for the safety of all his, and therefore he is said to carry them in his Bosom, where nothing truly hurtful can befall them, Isa. 40. 11.*

2. *In respect of Bounty, by supplying them with Good, even all that is necessary and convenient for them. Whoever want, his Children shall not ; he knows what they need, and when they need it, and always deviseth means for their seasonable Relief. He calls Heaven and Earth to take notice of this ; Isa. 1. 2. I have nourish'd and brought up Children. There is a Table prepar'd for the King's Sons, at which his Mephibosheths eat, 2 Sam. 9. 11. God hath eminently undertaken for their certain and undoubted maintenance ; there is an Emphasis upon it ; Verily thou shalt be fed, Psal. 37. 3. rather than not have a Seed to serve him, he'll raise Children out of Stones ; rather than they starve, those Stones shall become Bread.*

5. *They*

5. *They are made joint Heirs with Christ*, which is extraordinary indeed, and yet follows upon our being Children, *Rom. 8. 17.* No Children of God, but what is entituled to a glorious Inheritance, and (which makes it much more marvellous) they are made to inherit with our Lord Jesus himself. *God calls them into the Fellowship of his Son, 1 Cor. 1. 9.* to partake of the same Glory which is given to him, to possess the same Kingdom which is appointed to him, to sit upon his Throne, and reign in Company with the Lamb for ever and ever. As if it were not enough for us to reap the Benefits of the Sufferings of Christ, we shall share in his Advancement: The depth of his Humiliation was purely for our sakes, the height of his Exaltation will likewise turn to our account.

6. *They have the best and most useful Service from all Creatures, in the invisible and visible World, both those that are above them, and those that are below them.*

1. *Creatures that are above them do Service to them.* Angels disdain not to be their Guardians while they are here, as they are to be their more intimate and perpetual Associates hereafter. *Are they not all (without exception, the highest Orders of them) sent forth as ministering Spirits, on the behalf of the Heirs of Salvation? Heb. 1. ult.* Who but they can look to be thus attended? Angels of Light do gladly minister to the Children of Light; they are deputed by our Heavenly Father to keep us in all our ways, and at last to convey us home.

2. *Creatures below them, are directed and overruled to serve them also.* Every one in God's great House on Earth, shall (though perhaps without

without your knowledge, and against your will) promote the Interest of those that are design'd to dwell in Heaven. As *all things are put under the feet of Christ, our elder Brother*, Ephes. 1. 22. so we by him recover as much of our lost Dominion, as we have real occasion for. The whole Creation is more subject to the Heirs of God, than to the common Men.

2. To shew that this Sonship of Believers is a Gospel Privilege. It is so in a two-fold sense, by way of opposition to the Law of Works, and by way of composition with the times of the Old Testament. Consider it either way, it is truly and strictly Evangelical.

1. In Opposition to the Law of Works. No Soul was ever invested thereby with this blessed Privilege of Adoption. This is plain, because,

1. *The Law worketh Wrath*, and nothing else, Rom. 4. 15. It speaks no Favour to any Son or Daughter of Adam; it breaths out Threatnings, but is utterly silent, as to Promises. The Language of the Law is Judgment without Mercy, extremity of Vengeance without any mixture of Kindness. Therefore 'tis said, that *as many as are under the Works of the Law* (who are in the first Covenant, and adhere to it, and rest upon it) *are under the Curse*, Gal. 3. 10. Adoption through Grace, is perfectly concluded by the Law; it will never make Men Children of God, but pronounces them Children of Wrath.

2. *The Law convinces of Sin and Guilt, but gives no Righteousness*; therefore Sonship cannot come by the Law. For Adoption presupposes Justification, and is consequent upon it. The Children

of God are all Righteous, with a Righteousness that perfectly answers the Legal Demands, viz. the Righteousness of Christ, *For in him shall all the Seed of Israel be justified*, Isa. 45. 25. But now all the natural Seed of Adam, before they are adopted to God, are Condemned for want of such a Righteousness. The Law Sentence goes forth against them, and takes hold of them, as Guilty Sinners, that have broken the Commandment, can never keep it.

2. *In comparison with the Times of the Old Testament.* 'Tis true, the Believers in those times were the Sons and Daughters of God, and they challeng'd their Privilege; *Isa. 63. 16. Doubtless, thou art our Father*, but yet it was in so defective a degree, that they seem'd more like to Servants than Sons, and were trained up under suitable Discipline. Hence the Apostle says, *ver. 7. following the Text, Wherefore thou art no more a Servant, but a Son*; implying, that thou hast been in a kind of servile, but art now Translated, in these New Testament Times, into a more filial, State. Our Privilege of Sonship, under the Gospel, excels in Two Regards,

1. *As to clearness of Manifestation and Discovery.* The Children of Princes and great Persons many times know little of the Honour and Hopes which they are born to, till they arrive at some competent maturity: So the Ancient Believers understood a great deal less of Divine Benefits by Jesus Christ, than we do now. They (like *Moses*) had a Veil upon their Faces, we behold with open Face, if compared with them. They were not strangers to the Covenant of Promise, but their acquaintance with the things promised fell very short of ours. All that is
freely

freely given us of God, is now made more known, and plac'd in a better Light.

2. *As to Fulness and Amplitude of Enjoyment.* The Merit and Influence of Christ's Death in all Points extended backwards, as far as the First Ages of the World, wherein any Believers lived; but the Fruits of it then did not so abound, as since his coming. The Spirit was shed abroad and pour'd out then, but not so richly and liberally as now. He was given then more sparingly, now in a larger measure. And consequently their Fruition of this blessed Sonship was not equal to ours; though they had such a Privilege, they could not use it with so much advantage. They were like Heirs in Childhood, that have only some smaller allowance during that time; we are like those upon the edge of Manhood, who have more of their Estate in their own Hands.

III. *How is this Gospel-Privilege discern'd by the help of the Spirit?* How do we come to know that we have it, through the sending of him into ours Hearts?

Ans. In six Propositions.

1. *The Spirit of God in his dealing with Souls, does not ordinarily begin as a Spirit of Adoption, but rather as a Spirit of Bondage.* This seems to be hinted, Rom. 8. 15. *You have not received the Spirit of Bondage again to fear; but you have received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.* This was written to actual Believers, those that were called to be Saints; and their not receiving of the Spirit of Bondage again, after they had received the Spirit of Adoption, supposes they had so received him before. The Spirit of Bondage and Adoption, are one and

the same Spirit, distinguish'd only by various Operations, noting two different Effects of the same Cause. Now usually the former of these does precede and introduce the latter; while the Spirit is making use of the Law to bring us to Christ, we see our selves in a miserable undone Condition, when he hath fully brought us to Christ by the Ministry of the Gospel, the Scene is alter'd, and we perceive our selves to be the Seed which the Lord hath Blessed. Strong Cordials are not so fit to be immediately pour'd into foul Stomachs: There is a shaking which goes before the Establishment; a making of Trouble before the speaking of Peace; a Storm raised in the Soul before a comfortable Calm: As *Manasseh was taken first among the Thorns, and bound in Fetters, and carried to Babylon, and then knew the Lord, 2 Chron. 33. 11, 13.* And as *Joseph was sold for a Servant into Egypt, and laid in Irons there, which made way for his Enlargement and Preferment, Psalm 105. 17, 18, &c.* so does our Exercise under a Spirit of Bondage tend to Liberty by the Spirit of Adoption, if we are the Called according to God's purpose.

2. *The time of our continuance under a Spirit of Bondage, before we receive the Spirit of Adoption, with the degrees and measures of its working, is very different and uncertain.* Some know more of the Terrors of the Lord than others, and some are held longer in Prison before they are brought out; though no Soul knows more, or is held longer, than God sees needful to its thorough Humiliation. We must be laid low, and yet we shall not be quite sunk. God's wounding and healing of our Spirits is not always performed with the same speed; as all Convictions are not alike

alike sharp. God does not limit himself in this case to any stated Rules which are known to us, but acts as he thinks fit, towards various Persons. He hath said *he will not contend for ever*, but yet we cannot punctually tell how long he will contend. His dealing with one Soul must not be alledged as the exact Pattern of his Dealing with another. Some Dispositions are more rough and stubborn, some sins have been more hainously aggravated; perhaps their Chains may be the heavier, and not so soon taken off. Common Parents consider the Tempers and Crimes of their several Children, and proportion their Rebukes accordingly.

S 3 . SER.

SERMON XVIII.

March 9. 1697.

GAL. IV. vi.

And because ye are Sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your Hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

3. **T**HE Spirits usual way of evidencing our Sonship to us, is not by any vocal Testimony, or immediate Revelation. Every Servant must not look to be as his Lord in this respect, who had the Spirit of God visibly descending upon him at his Baptism, with a voice from Heaven, saying, *This is my beloved Son, &c.* Matth. 3. 16, 17. What sudden Divine Suggestions to this purpose, filling the Soul in a moment with extraordinary Joy, may be sometimes afforded to some peculiar Persons at peculiar seasons, I will not dispute; it may be, when a Soul is under strong and violent Temptations from Satan, to throw up all its hopes; or after long Attendance upon God in some soleme secret Duties, or before our Entrance upon some very difficult and hazardous publick Services; but such things are not commonly to be expected. God does not

tie or confine himself to ordinary means, but yet he generally makes use of them, and works by them. 'Tis possible *some may be wone without the Word*, 1 Pet. 3. 1. but yet the *most are born again by the Word*, chap. 1. 23. so 'tis possible, that the Spirit may in some cases reveal himself to our Comfort without the Word (though never against it) but this is not the Method which he commonly takes.

4. *The usual way of the Spirit in the declaring and confirming of our Sonship to us, is by a particular powerful Application of Gospel Promises to us, and an illustration of his own Fruits in us.*

1. *By an Application of Gospel Promises.* There are many Promises to the same effect with that, 2 Cor. 6. 18. *I will be a Father to you, and you shall be my Sons and Daughters, &c.* This avails but little to us, till by a Spirit of Faith we are enabled to take hold of it; 'tis great and precious in it self, but we are not at all the richer, till it is applied and set home with a mighty power upon the Soul; then 'tis an inestimable Treasure, a Mine, a Spring of everlasting Consolation. The Spirit takes of Christ's, and shews them unto us; not only Christ's things, but Christ's words too; and that word among the rest, *John 14. 8. I will not leave you comfortless*, Gr. Orphans. Such a word as this is enough, if he do but imprint it.

2. *By an illustration of his own Fruits.* These are the Marks of our Adoption, which the Word refers us to, and so the Spirit speaks according to the Word, in helping us to argue from them. As the Grace of God in Truth, is by his Operation, so the discovery of the Truth of Grace, is by his Light reflected upon it; that

Christ formed in the Soul may be even felt, as when the Babe leaped in *Elizabeth's* Womb, at *Mary's* Salutation, *Luke* 1. 44. The Spirit of God submits his witnessing Act to be tried by what he hath wrought in us, which is no more dishonour to him, than it was to Christ, who requir'd the *Jews* to believe him for his Works sake, *John* 14. 11. As *Jacob's* Sons pointed him to the Waggon which *Joseph* sent, for a proof that he was alive, *Gen.* 45. 27.

5. *The Spirit of God is very Arbitrary, both in the giving and continuing of his Divine Testimony.* He is an infinitely free Agent as to both ; He shines as well as breaths upon whom he pleases, and when he pleases.

1. *The Spirit acts Arbitrarily, after a Sovereign way, in the giving of this Testimony concerning our Adoption.* The Liberty of the Divine Will appears in the Communication of Grace, and yet more in the dispensing of Comfort. The Spirit of God is not at our command, any more than the Wind which Christ compares him to, and which God is said to gather in his Fists, *Prov.* 33. 4. and to bring forth out of his Treasure, *Jer.* 10. 13. He is not such a Witness as Men may summon and produce to clear and strengthen their Cause in Humane Courts, who sometimes are oblig'd under certain Penalties to appear and give in their Evidence. There can be no necessity laid upon him ; as God sometimes holds his peace and is still, when he might answer by terrible things, so the Spirit of God might be silent in our Hearts, when he cries, *Abba, Father.*

2. *The Spirit Acts after the same Arbitrary manner in the continuing of this Testimony, after 'tis once given.* He can weaken and abate it, he can suspend and with-draw it, at his own Pleasure. He that bears Witness at one Time, may not do it at another. Evidences may be darken'd and obscur'd, which were very bright and plain; hidden Manna, like that in the Wilderness, is not constantly gather'd every Day; but very often is like that Vessel, in *Peter's* Vision, which was let down thrice to the Earth, *And then received up again into Heaven, Acts* 10. 16. This makes the Ebbings and Flowings in our Hopes and Joys.

6. *The Spirits testifying of our Adoption is therefore distinct from our Adoption it self, and not indispensibly Essential to it.* The Truth of the Relation does neither include, nor depend upon our Knowledge of that Relation. A Man may be really a *Child of God*, and not know himself to be so by the infallible Declaration of the Spirit of God; he may have (as *Job* had, *Chap.* 16. 19) *A Witness in Heaven, and a Record on high*, and yet want a legible Copy of it in his own Bosom for his present Satisfaction. The Spirits witnessing is not that which makes us the *Children of God*, but supposes us to be so before; he Witnesses *that we are Children*, and therefore we are not the *Jels Children*, though he should not Witness it. We should lose the Comfort of our Sonship very much indeed, but the fundamental Priviledge it self would remain however. Things which for a while are not perceiv'd to be, do not therefore cease to be; we may be taken into the number of the *Sons of God*, and yet want the Manifestation of our being

ing such (*Rom. 8. 19.*) I speak not this to discourage any in the least from looking after the clearing up of these Matters as much as can be to their own Souls, but to prevent those from being too much discouraged, who are yet kept in the dark by God; that they may not conclude positively against themselves, but rather take Courage with the Church under the hidings of God's Face; *But thou art our Father, Isa. 64. 7, 8.*

IV. *How is this Priviledge of a Believer's Sonship improved by the Spirit's help?* The Text seems to have a special Reference to Prayer, and to our Challenging and Pleading of this filial Relation in that Duty. I shall endeavour the opening of this Point in these eight Things.

1. *That the Spirit of Christ is particularly promis'd and given as a Spirit of Supplication, Zech. 12. 10.* His Influence is eminently needful in this Service. We should never find in our Hearts to Pray one acceptable Prayer to God throughout our Lives, if the Spirit did not put it into our Hearts first. We cannot speak to God in any Language which he will hear, upon any occasion whatsoever, without the Spirit's Direction. They are all vain Words, which are not of his Teaching; the froth and scum of Man's Invention, which however esteemed among Creatures here below, bears no Price at all in Heaven. Every Petition which the Father receives, is dictated and drawn up by the Holy Ghost. God never inclines his own Ear, but when he thus prepares our Hearts: Except this Advocate be at Work in us, there is no finding of Audience with

with him. And therefore they that prophanelly renounce all Supplication in and by the Spirit (as some have done) may as well go a little further, and lay aside all Supplication in general; for whatever Prayer they pour out, is as Water spilt on the Ground.

2. *Effectual Prayer, such as the Spirit teaches and helps us in, is put up to God as a Father.* Jesus Christ is a Pattern to us; and if we examine the style of his Prayers, we shall find, that they are all grounded upon this Relation.

Mat. 11. 25. I thank thee, oh Father, &c. which Title is repeated, *ver. 26. Even so Father, &c.* *John 12. 27. Father, save me from this Hour.* *Father, glorifie thy Name.* And no less than six Times over, *Chap 17. Again in the Garden, Mat. 26. 39. O my Father, if it be possible, &c.* Yea, some of his last Words upon the Cross were in the same strain, when he came to give up the Ghost, *Luke 23. 46. Father into thy Hands, &c.* And that we might not think, this was proper and suitable to him only, the Directory which he gave to his Disciples, is so likewise: *After this manner Pray ye, Our Father, &c. Mat. 6. 9.* When the Scripture speaks of making Supplication to our Judge, *Job 9. 15.* We must understand it of Praying that he would not deal with us as a Judge, *Psalms 143. 2. Enter not into Judgment, &c.*

3. *The Praying Dispositions of Children are first infus'd into them by the Spirit.* Every Babe in Christ is furnish'd with them, and as he increases in spiritual Strength and Stature, they grow up with him. Children naturally apply themselves to their Parents for what they want, rather than to other Persons; and this also is natural

ral to all the Children of God. 'Tis a part of their new Nature, which is the Work and Product of the Spirit. He that hath not a Divine Principle in him, which leads him to call on the Father, deserves not to be call'd a Christian. Assoon as the Soul is born again, it cries, and its cry is immediately to him whom it is born of. This cry is renewed every Day, several times in a Day; for there is an Habit of this kind emplant'd in the Soul, which puts forth it self in frequent Acts. The Spirit's quickening is always accompanied with inward groaning; so that, where no such groans are, we may be sure that Death hath Dominion still, and the Man hath not begun to Live.

4. *The Spirit fills the Mouth with Arguments in the very Act of Prayer, such as are fit to be us'd and urg'd to a Father.* Holy and humble Argumentations with God, are truly the very sinews of Prayer, wherein its great Strength lies. It does not so much consist in the bare proposing of our Requests to God, as in the alledging of proper Pleas for God's answering and fulfilling of them. Such as that of the Church, *Isa. 63. 15. Where is the sounding of thy Bowels, and of thy Mercies towards me? are they restrained?* This is Connected with their Claim of God as a Father in the next Words twice, *ver. 16.* A fatherly Relation speaks Tenderneſs and Compassion, *Pſalm 103. 13. Like as a Father pitieth his Children, &c.* Whoever are void of Pity, Fathers are wont to put on Bowels; or if the Fathers of our Flesh should be unnatural, the Father of our Spirits cannot be so; and therefore this was a very apt and agreeable Plea, which the Spirit of God hath Register'd
for

for us. Whatever you need to have done, in-treat of God to do, as becomes a Father.

5. *The Spirit enables us to go to God as a Father, with Confidence; for whom can Children repair so freely to, as to their own Parent? Whom can they with so much certainty expect Relief from, as from him that begat them? Therefore as we have Access by one Spirit unto the Father, Eph. 2. 18. So we are said to have boldness and access; or access with boldness, Chap. 3. 12. The Command of God is to ask in Faith; to trust him and depend upon him for the seasonable Accomplishment of all our regular Desires; and this dependance is as much our Duty, as Subjection is; and it is every whit as difficult, yea as impossible to be perform'd, without the help of the Spirit. 'Tis far easier to utter many thousands of Petitions before God, than to lift up one to him believably. But when the Soul is strengthen'd with all might by the Spirit in this Duty, all the workings of unbelief are instantly subdued; Doubts and Fears of our Acceptance and Success are made to vanish; like Shadows that fly away upon the Appearance of the Sun.*

6. *The Spirit instructs us how to Address our selves to God as a Father with becoming Reverence. There must be a mixture of this with our Confidence; or else we abuse our Priviledge, instead of improving it. The same Spirit is a Spirit of the fear of the Lord, as well as of Faith, Isa. 11. 2. We are not to make so bold with God, as not to stand in awe of him. The Freedom which God allows us in his Presence, is not a rude Familiarity; this is not Child-like, for a Father ought to be respected by those that descend*

scend from him. He must be consider'd as a Superiour, and honour'd accordingly; and the more Kind and Indulgent he is, the more Honour is due. Any behaviour that betrays a slight esteem, or a presumptuous Contempt of God, is offensive to him; and they that carry themselves so, have Reason to try and condemn the Spirit which they are acted by. He is our Father in Heaven, and we his Children on Earth, *Eccles. 5. 2.* He sits upon a Throne, and we must remember that we Worship at his Footstool.

7. *The Spirit stirs up filial Affection to God in Prayer.* This makes it a delightful Exercise, as indeed it should be. Do Children count it a burdensome Task to go to a Father, or are they not rather glad of the Opportunity of Converse with those that are so dear to them? A Slave indeed hath an Aversion to the Presence of his Lord, as the Bond-woman, *When Sarah dealt hardly with her, fled from her Face, Gen. 16. 6.* But when a Child hath to do with a tender Parent, 'tis quite contrary; 'tis sweet Employment to pour out the Soul into a Father's Bosom. We set about it with Pleasure, and a Pleasure which exceeds the Fruition of any Creatures whatsoever. The Spirit of Adoption is a Spirit of Love; and this Love breaths out it self in Holy Desires to him. The Soul loves to commune with him, for his own sake, even though we could suppose; that there were no pressing occasion for it; it loves to visit him not only in Trouble, when Necessity drives, but at all other Times, being drawn by internal Motives.

8. *The Spirit helps us to Pray with unwearied Fervency.* It behoves us so to do, when we are dealing with a Father, who will certainly be won and prevail'd upon, how deaf or regardless soever he may seem to be for a Time. Dull and stupid formality does not suit with the Relation wherein we stand; where we look for cold Entertainment, 'tis apt to cool our Requests; but *Esaú's* Opinion of his Fathers Favour, made him the more earnest for his Blessing, *Gen. 27. 34, 38.* The Children of God are baptized with Fire, their Hearts burn within them, and it would be strange, if their Words should freeze. Theirs is not an Artificial Zeal, which is quickly spent; but a Zeal which holds out, till the desire comes; and by this means they are always Conquerors; and as 'tis said of *Iuther* (*Iste vir potuit apud Deum quicquid voluit*) they can do what they will with God; they will take no denial, but wrestle and strive, till they have obtain'd. All this is done by the Assistance of the Spirit of our Father.

V. Use.

I Information.

1. *The Love of God is to be seen and admir'd in our Adoption, as much as in any Thing besides:* The Love of the Father in predestinating us to it, the Love of the Son, in procuring it for us, and the Love of the Spirit in testifying it to us. 'Tis God's loving us as Children, which is the Foundation and Root of all our Love to him as a Father; for his Love descends, before ours ascends. 'Tis marvellous that God should answer to any such Name, when we call him by it, and that he should give us any such Name him-

himself, the Apostle breaks forth into a kind of Ecstasie and Ravishment of Spirit, when he consider'd it; 1 *John* 3. 1. *Behold, what manner of Love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the Sons of God?* That in the Place, where it was said to us *Gentiles*, *Ye are not my People*, it should be now said, *You are the Sons of the Living God?* *Hos.* 1. 10. *Rom.* 9. 26. Are such vile Prodigals as we, *Worthy to be call'd his Sons?* *Luke* 15. 21. That cannot be suppos'd; nor is it for want of other Objects; that he bestows this Favour upon us. He hath an Eternal Son, in whom his Soul delighteth, whom he possesseth with Infinite Joy before all his Works of Old; or this Favour might have been directed to fallen Angels; but God hath preferr'd us Inferiour Creatures to that which they are excluded from.

2. *The Dignity of Believers excels all the Titles of Honour in the World; 'tis of a more glorious Nature, and confirm'd by a greater Testimony. By Faith, Moses refused to be call'd the Son of Pharaoh's Daughter, though Pharaoh was a mighty Prince, Heb.* 11. 24. *It pleased David to be Son-in-law to the King before he was so, but he found little Comfort in it afterwards, 1 Sam.* 18. 26. These Relations to the greatest of Men, are poor trifling, mean and empty Things, in Comparison of Believer's Relation to God. Magistrates are called *Children of the most High*, because they bear some little faint Representation of God's Authority, *Psalms* 82. 6. But the least of Christ's little ones are God's Children in a sublimer Sense. 'Tis Ten Thousand Times more honourable to be a Child of God, then Lord of the whole Earth.

3. Walk-

3. *Walking after the Commandments of Men is a very ungrateful requital of God.* Certainly we owe most Duty, where we receive the greatest Priviledge; and what can Men do for us, to be compar'd with what God hath done, that we should pay any Homage to them, in Opposition to him? 'Tis basely disingenuous for Children to regard what others say, more than the Injunctions of their own Parents. The Sense of this unspeakable Benefit of God's adopting us to himself, is enough to restrain us from yielding Obedience to Men, that is inconsistent with our Obedience to God. This is the meaning and scope of that Caution given by Christ; *Mat. 23. 9. Call no Man your Father upon Earth, for one is your Father, which is in Heaven.* That one God whose Children we are, hath the only Supream Title to our Allegiance.

4. *The possibility of Assurance, one would think, should be without all Controversie.* To call it in Question, is to give the lye to this very Text, and to cast a blasphemous Reproach upon the Witness of the Spirit. 'Tis matter of rejoicing, *to have the single Testimony of our own Conscience for us, 2 Cor. 1. 12.* For Conscience (as one says) is like a kind of Eccho which makes our spiritual Actions resound, after they are past and gone from us; but when we have the concurrent Testimony of the Spirit of God, this makes our Joy a great deal more full, *Rom. 8. 16. The Spirit it self beareth Witness with our Spirit, that we are the Children of God.* The Spirit is more present and conversant with the Soul, than the Soul with it self, and is better acquainted with its State; He knows every Child of God by Name, and therefore is best able to make us

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know, if we are such; if an Angel from Heaven were sent to tell us, it would not be so sure, *The Spirit that beareth Witness of those things, is Truth in the abstract*, 1 John 5. 6. Some may be deluded by a lying Spirit, instead of him, but does it follow, that there must be no Persuasion which comes of him that calls us? Because there are Counterfeits in the World, are there no Realities? So, the Assurance of the strongest Believer's may not be compleat perhaps, but is it therefore not true? Our Graces, the Fruits of the Spirit, are all imperfect, but that does not make them false and feigned; and Perfection in Comfort is above the standard of this Life, as well as in Holiness.

II. Exhortation.

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1. *Enquire into your own Adoption.* 'Tis not a Priviledge common to all, see whether you have just Cause to apprehend that 'tis yours. The World hath a mixt Multitude in it; there are Sons of *Belial*, and *Children of the Devil*, as well as of *God*, 1 John 3. 10. There are Strangers and Dogs, as well as Children. And there be many who are called the Children of God, and are not so indeed; being such only by visible external Profession, as they were, *Gen.* 6. 2. We deceive our selves, if we are satisfied with this, for this will be of no more Advantage to us, than the National Adoption which once belong'd to the *Jews*, is useful to them; with Respect to which the Apostle positively says, *They which are the Children of the Flesh, are not the Children of God*, *Rom.* 9. 8. Think not that 'tis enough to be Christains outwardly (any more than to be *Jews* outwardly)

wardly) but look after a real Change of State.

2. *Apply your selves to God for this Benefit, if yet destitute of it.* Consider what miserable helpless Creatures you are in your present Case, like a wretched Infant that is cast out into the open Field, in the Day that it is born, Ezek. 16. 5. Go and bemoan your Case at the Foot of God; And as Abraham said to him, Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go Childless, Gen. 15. 2. You may much better say, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go Fatherless? What canst thou give that I can receive any Comfort in? Tell him, that you can never call your selves Happy, till you can call him Father, and that you desire nothing besides this, in Comparison of it. The Chief of Sinners may take Encouragement from that blessed Text, Jer. 3. 19. Justice seems to argue against it in the former Part of the verse, and Mercy concludes for it in the latter.

3. *Take heed of grieving the Spirit, you who have this Benefit, that you may not lose the comfortable Sense of it.* This depends upon his sealing Work; and therefore provoke and offend him not, if you would keep the Impression clear, Eph. 4. 30. Two Things are especially grievous to the Spirit, which we should beware of, neglecting his Motions, and opposing his Testimony.

1. *Neglecting his Motions.* When he stirs us up to seeking of God, and any Act of Communion with him, we should stir up our selves. It is a part of the Character of God's Children, to regard the Spirit's Conduct, Rom. 8. 14. *As many as are led by the Spirit of God, &c.*

2. *Opposing his Testimony.* The indulging of unbelief in our own Hearts, is a Contradiction

to the Spirit's Witness. *He is sent forth to cry, Abba, Father,* unbelief says nay, God is not so unto me. It will be helpful to Souls in such Temptations, to look to God as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for this will bring them to Eye him as theirs also. See *John 20. 17. Eph. 1. 2, 3.* That Promise seems to concern both Christ and the Believer too; *Psalms 89. 26. He shall cry unto me, thou art my Father, &c.* You may venture to say that after Christ, which otherwise you could not.

4. *Evidence the Truth of your Sonship unto others.* Make it appear that there is indeed a substantial Difference between you and the Children of this World in every Thing that hath a respect to Sin and Duty. If you do as others do, they will have Reason to suspect that you are not what you pretend to be. The Jews were not to disfigure themselves, like other People, *because they were the Children of the Lord their God, Deut. 14. 1.* Let your spot therefore be the spot of his Children; let his Image be seen upon you, as well as his Name, that you may (like them, *Judg. 8. 18.*) *Resemble the Children of such a King.* You must be Followers, and Imitators of God, *Eph. 5. 1.* Or else you will give occasion to Men to think you a spurious Brood. You must be *blameless and harmless, and without rebuke* (exemplary and inoffensive) *in the midst of a perverse Nation; for so are the Sons of God, Phil. 2. 15.* Disorderly Children are a shame and scandal to their Parents; therefore Credit the Relation wherein you stand, by a strict and regular Deportment. Particularly,

1. *By a sober and thankful use of every Mercy.* Wanton Prodigals that wast their Substance and mispend their Portion, are a dishonour to God's Family, and deserve to be renounc'd. Your Father expects that all which is given by him, should be improved for him. Men reckon it barbarous and unnatural, if their Children turn Rebels against them with the Estates which they bestow upon them.

2. *By a patient and humble bearing of every Affliction.* Not that a Fathers Anger is a Light thing, and to be despis'd; they must be very profligate that think so; but all his Rebukes should be receiv'd with great Submission. Nor must they drive us from him, but make us come the nearer, and cling the faster to him; considering that God's Corrections endur'd in a right Manner, are Proofs of our Legitimacy, *Heb. 12. 6, 7, 8.*

3. *By a reconcileable and forgiving temper towards the worst of Men.* *Mat. 5. 9. Blessed are the Peace-makers, for they shall be called the Children of God.* So *ver. 44, 45. Love your Enemies, bless them that Curse you, do good to them that Hate you, &c. That you may be the Children of your Father which is in Heaven, &c.* For this is to transcribe his Pattern, and do as he does.

4. *By living in Love with all our Holy Brethren.* They do not walk worthy of such a Relation as this is; that shew any Unchristian bitterness, or unreasonable strangeness towards those that are of the same stock with themselves. Let us check our selves in this Case with those Words of the Prophet, *Mal. 2. 10.*

Have we not all one Father? Why do we then deal treacherously every Man against his Brother? To Conclude, Brotherly Kindness is the necessary Duty of all God's Children, and a necessary Token to convince all others that we are so.

SER.

SERMON XIX.

May 18. 1697.

EPHES IV. vii.

But unto every one of us is given Grace according to the measure of the Gift of Christ.

AS it is the Apostle's manner in his other Epistles, to mingle Exhortations to Holiness, with Explications of Faith, so here, having in the three former Chapters of this Epistle given some account of the Gospel Doctrine, he does in the three latter stir up to suitable Practice. In the beginning of this Chapter he presses worthy Walking with respect to those Instances of Humility, Meekness, and Christian Forbearance, as things which have a special Influence in the furthering of Unity and Peace. To enforce this, he makes use of two sorts of Motives.

1st. He argues from several things which are one and the same in the Church of God; which do all tend to fasten and engage us to one another: *ver. 4, 5, 6. There is one Body, and one Spirit, &c.*

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2dly. He argues from those things in which there is a diversity, viz. *The Graces of Believers*; for their Diversity is also an Argument to Love and Concord. This is the Subject of the Text, *But unto every one*, &c. The manner of proposing this Argument, with the Particle *But*, plainly shews that the Apostle here designs to prevent an Objection, from God's unequal Distribution of Grace, which corrupt Nature is very apt to make an occasion of Division, whereas indeed, if well considered, 'tis rather a strong and powerful Bond of Union; for seeing every one hath his several Graces from God, and no one hath all, it follows, that we are mutually indigent of each others Assistance, and ought to be mutually Useful in affording it; if one hath that Grace which another wants; and if one wants what another hath, they should therefore agree to be helpers of their Brethren in Christ; all Grace being dispensed by the same Benefactor, proceeding from the same Author, and referring to one general End.

In the Words we have Four Particulars.

1st. *The thing spoken of, [Grace]*: This is a word which hath various Significations in the Scripture: Sometimes 'tis put for Grace in God, his Mercy and Kindness, Favour and good Will, in opposition to our own Works, or any thing in the Creature; so *Eph. 2. 8. We are saved by Grace, &c.* So we read of the *Election of Grace*, *Rom. 11. 5.* and *Justification by Grace*, *chap. 3. 24.* For this is the Foundation and Principle of all that God doth for us; we must still cry, *Grace, Grace to it.* Sometimes 'tis put for the Doctrine of Grace, i.e. The Gospel which is truly and strictly so. *Gal. 5. 4. You are fallen from Grace.* 1 *Pet. 5. 12.*

This

This, is the true Grace of God wherein you stand. Sometimes 'tis put for the Fruits and Effects of the Grace of God in us, and they are twofold, Common Gifts, or special Graces.

1. *Common Gifts* ; which Salvation may be separated from. Thus *Paul* expresses his Call to the Apostleship often, by *the Grace given to him*, *Rom. 1. 5. Chap. 15. 15. 1 Cor. 3. 10. Gal. 2. 9. Ephes. 3. 7, 8.*

2. *Special Graces* ; such as always accompany Salvation, or carry Salvation in them. Thus a charitable Disposition to relieve the Needy, hath the Title and Character of Grace, *2 Cor. 8. 6, 7.* 'Tis probable that Grace may include both Senses, but I shall chuse to speak chiefly of the latter.

2dly. *The way of Communication, [Is given.]* 'Tis not due or owing to us ; God is not oblig'd to impart any thing to us, but he freely promises, and freely bestows it. *He freely gives us all things*, *Rom. 8. 32. 1 Cor. 2. 12.* 'tis all voluntary, that which he might have righteously refused to do. Of his own Will he first dispenses the Grace of Conversion, and afterwards for our progressive Sanctification. His Justice does not bind, but his Goodness moves him to it. If he had left all Mankind lying in Wickedness, as well as those whom he passed by, he had been a God without Iniquity. There was no reason why he should Restore what we had lost, and Repair what we had defac'd, but because he would.

3dly. *The Persons that are the Receivers, [To every one of us.] i. e.* Either,

1. *To all actual Believers, that are or have been since the beginning of the World.* To every one that

that now hath Grace, or that ever had it, it was and is given. So some interpret *John* 1. 9. *Every Man that cometh into the World, and is enlightened, is enlightened by him.* Or,

2. *To all his chosen Ones, even to the end of the World.* All that are given to Christ, shall receive Grace from him. *Whom he did predestinate, be also will call,* *Rom.* 8. 30. They to whom Grace was given in the Eternal Purpose of God before the World, shall be most certainly partakers of it in time.

4thly. *The original Spring or Pattern of it, [According to the measure of the Gift of Christ.]* This may be taken either way,

1. *As denoting the Spring of this Grace : i. e. according to the Liberality and Munificence of Christ, and in the measure which it pleases him to give.* This Construction is favoured by the next words, which are a Citation of *Psal.* 68. 18. *He gave Gifts unto Men.*

2. *As intimating the Pattern of this Grace.* Christ is not only the Giver, but the Exemplar of it. There is some Correspondence between the Grace in Christ, and in us. So some understand that, *John* 1. 16. *Grace for Grace.* As there is a Shadow and Reflection in the Glass, which answers to the real Face ; as in a well drawn Copy, there is a resemblance of that which 'tis drawn from ; and as the printed paper contains the Stamp and Signature of those Letters which are set in the Press, so there is some kind of Analogy and likeness betwixt Christ's Grace and ours.

Observ. *There is a Grace given by Christ to every one that belongs to him, bearing some proportion*

portion and similitude to that which was conferr'd upon himself. Here,

- I. Shew what Purposes this Grace serves for.
- II. Wherein it appears to be given.
- III. How given by Christ.
- IV. After what Manner given to every one that belongs to Christ.
- V. What Proportion and Similitude does it bear to his Grace.
- VI. Use.

I. *What Purposes does this Grace serve for?*

Ans. *All is included in these two Things.*

1. *For the fixing of Holy Principles.* This is what the Apostle calls the *establishing of the Heart with Grace*, Heb. 13. 9. There can be no steady walk with God, till this is done. If we be not transformed by Grace in the renewing of our Minds, all other Changes and Alterations signifie nothing, and will come to nothing. This only infers a real change of the Man; for the Man is, according as his Principles are, and sooner or later they will be Operative, and discover themselves. A gracious Person is one endowed with gracious Habits, and settled in a gracious State. It is the Seed abiding in us, which denominates us truly alive to God, or else we are no better than Carkasses at the best, that are cover'd with Flowers or embalm'd with Spices, to keep them from being noisome and offensive to others.

2. *The producing of Holy Actions.* Where Principles are first fixed, these Actions flow as a pure stream from a clear Fountain. When the Sinner is turn'd into another Man, he naturally

turally steers another Course. And when he is under the Dominion of Grace, he is not so apt to be drawn aside by contrary Temptations, as one that is got no further, than the external Rules and Precepts of Morality. *'Tis only the Grace of God, which effectually teaches to deny ungodliness and worldly Lusts,* Tit. 2. 11, 12. This is the prevailing Antidote against practical *Atheism*, and all manner of licentiousness and sensuality. *Hereby we serve God acceptably,* Heb. 12. 28. *And hereby we have our Conversation in the World towards other Men,* so as to gain the *rejoycing Testimony of a good Conscience,* 2 Cor. 1. 12. Such Fruits of Righteousness does the Root of the Righteous always yield.

II. *Wherein does this Grace appear to be given?*
 Ans. *Two ways.*

1. *If we consider the Matter in general;* it must needs be given, because the Creature is in no Capacity to claim it as a debt. For,

1. *The Man that hath no Grace, can do nothing to deserve it.* Nothing that's done by the Strength of Nature, can Merit the infusing of a supernatural Power. Nature and Grace differ in kind; and Grace is of a kind more Superior to Nature, than Heaven is to Earth. There is no Affinity or Comparison between Flesh and Spirit, and consequently none between *that which is born of the Flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit,* John 3. 6. What we bring forth in a State of Sin, is all after our own likeness; and can this qualifie us for being Created again after the likeness of God? All antecedent Dispositions and Preparations rise no higher than the carnal Standard; they are

still but dead Works, which fall infinitely short of a Divine quickening. If Glory is not to be procur'd by the most vigorous Exercises of Grace, much less Grace by the utmost endeavours of Nature.

2. *We are so far from desiring Grace, that naturally we do not desire it.* Wheresoever Grace is sincerely desir'd, the good Work is begun. To will is not present with us, till God hath wrought it. Whoever covets to partake of God's Holiness, does in some Degree partake of it already. There is an Enmity and Opposition in corrupt Nature to the Work of saving Grace; instead of asking and seeking after it, we refuse and reject the offers of it, and rise up in Arms against it, before God hath subdued us to himself. How can we suppose that the Old Man should ever crave to be crucifi'd, and reigning Sin affect to be depos'd? We may as well think, that the Devil should wish the Subversion of his own Kingdom as that unrenewed Nature, and sinful Flesh should desire the Destruction of it self.

3. *We are so far from naturally desiring Grace, that we are not deeply sensible of our want of it, till God hath made us so.* By a deep Sense, I mean, a feeling Apprehension both of our being destitute of Grace, and being undone without it. Now this is imprest by the Spirit of God, where-ever it is. Graceless Persons either do not know their Condition to be so sinful, or not so miserable, as it is; they think themselves to have, what they have not, or else they are Content to want it, as if there were no need of having it. How then can he deserve a Cure, who fancies himself so whole, that he hath no occasion

occasion for a Physician? Or who thinks himself bound to bestow an Alms upon one that is too Proud to beg; and will not own his Necessity, but says, he is Rich enough? This is our Case with Respect to God.

2. *If we examine the Matter more particularly;* there are several express Instances in Scripture, which make it out to us. As

1. *The Spirit of God, who is the immediate Operator of all Grace in us, and therefore call'd the Spirit of Grace, Zech. 12. 10. Is said to be given us, Rom. 5. 5. 1 John 3. 24. Or else 'tis impossible, that ever we should receive him. Receiving implies a giving, A Man can receive nothing, unless it be given him from Heaven, John 3. 27. And therefore the World cannot receive the Spirit, because he was never promised, nor is he given to the World, Chap. 14. 17. Jesus Christ is not more the Gift of God to poor Sinners, than the Spirit is; they are both equally glorious Persons, and unspeakable inestimable Gifts. The Communication of the Holy Ghost is as great an Act of Bounty in God, as the Exhibition of his Son.*

2. *The New Nature, which is inclusive of all Grace, is represented in Scripture as a Gift, Ezek. 36. 26. A new Heart will I give you, &c. I will give you an Heart of Flesh. This new Heart, and Heart of Flesh does virtually comprehend in it every Grace, for all the habits of Grace are infus'd at once, not successively one after another; they are all really inherent when we are first made new Creatures, though not all on a sudden eminently visible. Now this new Heart which constitutes a new Creature, is absolutely given; so the Covenant runs. God does*

does not say, I will give it you, upon such and such Terms, if you do thus and thus, *but I will give you, &c.* If it were a suspended conditional Promise, it might never be performed.

3. *Saving Knowledge, which is coupled with Grace*, 2 Pet. 3. 18. And is indeed it self a Grace, *is given*. So God says, *I will give them an Heart to know me*, Jer. 24. 7. And Christ tells his Disciples, *Unto you it is given to know the Mysteries of the Kingdom, &c.* Mat. 13. 11. 'Tis rich Love and Mercy which makes the difference in this Case between some and others; between those who remain blind, as they are Born, and those whose Eyes are open'd, and that have the Veil upon their Hearts taken away. They to whom this Knowledge is given, and they to whom it is not given, are alike unworthy of it, and alike incapable of attaining it themselves, He that gives us natural Light for the guidance of our Bodies, does as truly give spiritual Light for the Conduct of our Souls.

4. *Faith is the Gift of God*, Eph. 2. 8. As 'tis stiled his Work to intimate that his Power is the Cause, so 'tis call'd his Gift to intimate that his goodness is the Motive. *Unto you it is given to believe*, Phil. 1. 29. The Grace of Faith is communicated to us with the same freeness as the Object of it is; and if it were not so, we should live and dye in our Infidelity. Our Lord positively says, *John 6. 65. No Man can come to me, except it be given to him of my Father.* We may as well undertake a perfect fulfilling of the whole Covenant of Works, as pretend to an Ability of receiving Christ, as tender'd in the Gospel. He is set up as the brazen

Serpent in the Wilderness, and God gives us an Eye to look to him, or else we should be nothing the better.

5. *Repentance is God's Gift also.* There is no Repentance to Salvation, but what is wrought by the God of Salvation. We may as well imagine, that Light should of it self Spring out of Darkness, and sweet Waters issue from a bitter Fountain, as that any such Grace should be the natural Product of our Impenitent Hearts. There is no hope of an Heart *desperately Wicked* (as the Heart of every Man by Nature is, *Jer. 17. 9.*) unless God is pleased by his Almighty Vertue to Work the Cure, and with an irresistible Hand to turn it to himself, *2 Tim. 2. 25.* *In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if peradventure God will give them Repentance, &c.* No Instruction will do, if he against whom they Sin, do not give them to repent.

III. *How is this Grace, the Gift of Christ, as the Text affirms it to be?*

Ans. In six Things.

1. *All Things are deliver'd unto him by the Father; to him as Mediator, Mat. 11. 27. All things are given into his Hand, John 3. 35.* And he hath the disposal of them, according to his own Pleasure, he may with-hold or dispense every Thing, as he sees good. **The Son quickeneth whom he will, Chap. 5. 21.* He is empower'd to give *Eternal Life, Chap. 10. 28. Chap. 17. 2.* And this Eternal Life is founded in spiritual. Now the ground-work is his, as well as the Head-stone; the first-fruits of Grace, as well as the Harvest of Glory; the Gift of Righteousness

ousness it self, as well as the Crown of Righteousness. *Chap. 4. 14. The Water which I shall give him, shall be in him, a Well springing up into Everlasting Life.* Christ hath so large a Trust and Commission from the Father, that nothing is excepted out of it.

2. *The giving of Grace is one of his essential Royalties, as a King.* To give only corruptible Things, is to give as the World giveth; the Men of high Degree scatter their Favours of that kind among those that are below them; but it agrees with the Majesty of Jesus Christ to bestow that which is of an incorruptible Nature, a Principle of Grace and Holiness, in the Hearts of his People, *Acts 5. 31. Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and Saviour, to give Repentance, &c.* He would be a Prince without Subjects, a meer Titular Prince, if he did not by his own Grace bring them into Subjection and keep them in it. He never ruled in any Heart, which he did not first Conquer; rebellious Sinners would never submit and yield themselves to his Authority, if he did not make them *willing in the day of his Power, Psalm 110. 3.*

3. *Christ is given to be an Head of Influence, as well as of Government to his Church.* Therefore said to be *the Head of the Body, Col. 1. 18.* Now as every Part of the natural Body derives Spirits from the Head, so every Part of the mystical Body gracious Influences from Christ. There is an effectual working from him, throughout the whole, *Eph. 4. 16.* And how is this effectual working, but by the Communication of his Grace to the various Members? This what *Paul* experienc'd, and gives an account of, with Reference to his own first Conversion,

1 Tim. 1. 14. *The Grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant, with Faith and Love, which is in Christ Jesus. Paul's Heart was full of unbelief, and hatred before, but the prevailing Grace of Christ, in whom he was chosen before the World, planted Faith and Love in the room of them.*

4. *'Tis the Work of Christ to furnish those whom he unites and espouses to himself, with Beauty and Ornaments fit for his Embraces; and wherein does this Beauty consist, and what are these Ornaments, but a Participation of his Grace? Some are ready to cry, is a deformed filthy Sinner meet to lye in Christ's Bosom? But I would Reply, who makes the Sinner meet, besides Christ himself? He can have no complacency or delight in such an one continuing as he is; but his Manner is to impart a commending loveliness where he loves. As Rebeckah was adorned with Jewel's of Isaac's giving, Gen. 24. 53. So it was granted to the Lambs Wife that *she should be arrayed in fine Linnen, &c.* of his preparing, Rev. 19. 8. For as the imputed Righteousness of Christ, so the inherent Righteousness of Saints is his Gift, whom they are married to.*

5. *Christ hath the right of distributing Grace, as the Effect of his Purchase. He hath bought it with his Blood, and therefore may confer it on whom he pleases; as we know that every one may do what he Will with his own, and what we buy at a valuable Price, is undoubtedly our own. Upon this score all Grace is the Grace of Christ; 'tis his just Propriety, and he hath obtain'd it at the dearest Rate which could be demanded. He gave himself for the Church, that*
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he might sanctifie and cleanse it, &c. Eph. 5. 25
26. Our Sanctification was one end of his Sufferings; and as it was he that suffer'd, so 'tis he that sanctifies. Christ merited Grace for us by his Death, and therefore the dispensing of it is his due.

6. *The Spirit of Grace, is sent by Christ, and supplies his Place.* John 16. 7. *If I depart, I will send him to you.* So that he Acts as in Christ's Name, and on his behalf, and consequently what the Spirit does, may be attributed unto Christ, and what he divides to every Man, may be very well look't upon as allotted by Christ, whose Spirit he is; for so he is called, *the Spirit of the Lord*, 2 Cor. 3. 17, 18. There is the very Heart of Christ in all the Spirits saving Operations; they are directed by his Infinite Wisdom and Care to all those whom he laid down his Life for. As he shed forth the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, Acts 2. 33. So the pouring of him out at all Times is his continual Providence still.

IV. *After what manner is this Grace given to every one that belongs to Christ?*

Ans. *Negatively and Positively.*

1. *Negatively.*

1. *This Grace is not given to all by the same Instruments and Means.* 'Tis most usually by the Word of Grace, but sometimes by the Rod of sanctified Affliction; 'tis oftneft by the Sword in Christ's Mouth, but it may be, by the Fan in his Hand. Ordinarily 'tis by the Preaching of Christ's Embassadors; but sometimes the edifying Discourses of Private Christians may Minister Grace to the Hearers, Eph. 4. 29. A-

gain, though it be by the same Gospel, yet God makes use of several Publishers: They whom he sanctifies through the Truth, are Converted by several Persons. There are many spiritual Fathers; some are begotten in Christ by the Ministry of one, and some by another.

2. *It is not given to all at the same Age or Period of Life:* As in that Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard, some were called at the third Hour, some at the sixth, some at the ninth, some at the eleventh. Some are sanctified from the Womb, *filled with the Spirit*, like *John*, from their very Birth; *Luke 1. 15.* Others it may be, wear out almost all their Lives, and are even dropping into the Grave, before they are brought home to God. Some are planted into Christ in their tender Years, like *Paul*, when a Young Man; others not born again till they are Old, *when the evil Days come.* And therefore it is not so material or requisite for us to know, when we felt the first workings of Grace, as to be sure that we feel it's real workings now.

3. *It is not given to all in the same remarkable Circumstances.* The Kingdom of God comes with more Observation into some Souls, than into others. Some are more gently, others more sharply dealt with; the Travel of the Soul, at the New-birth, is not with the same sensible Difficulty and Anguish in all Persons. Some pass from Death to Life, with greater Convulsions, *Like that noise and shaking, when the dry Bones came together*, *Ezek. 37. 7.* Others are call'd with a more still Voice and drawn to Christ in a more soft and silent way. Grace is sometimes introduc'd by deep Humiliations,
great

great brokenness, extraordinary disquiet, at others Times it insinuates it self into the Soul, with less of those Preparatives, and therefore less discernably.

4. *It is not given to all in the same Measure.*

To some more Grace, to others less. Justifying Righteousness is bestow'd alike upon every one, no one is made more righteous by the Obedience of Christ, than another; but as to the Gift of sanctifying Righteousness there are vastly different Degrees. Some in God's *Israel*, like *Saul*, higher from the Shoulders and upwards, others like *Zaccheus*, little of Stature. Some Weak, others Strong in Faith; some eminent for spiritual Understanding; *But there is not in every one that Knowledge*, 1 Cor. 8. 7. Some are even consum'd by their Zeal for God; but all are not such lively Stones, *Song 1. 17. The Beams of our House are Cedar, and our Rafter of Firr.* As Beams in God's building bear greatest weight, so Cedar is of greatest worth.

SERMON XX.

June 1. 1697.

EPHES IV. vii.

But unto every one of us is given Grace according to the measure of the Gift of Christ.

2. **P**ositively.

1. *There is some Grace given to every one, which shall never be lost; even to the least Babe in Christ, the poorest and meanest Believer whatsoever. Also upon the Servants, and the Hand-maids in those Days will I pour out my Spirit, Joel 2. 29. Every Member of Christ, even such as we think to be least honourable, hath this Honour bestowed upon it, to be made a partaker of the Holy Ghost, and partaker of him so, as never to fall away. For this is a Gift which is without Repentance, Rom. 11. 29. As to those that are God's workmanship in Christ, it never Repents him that he hath new made them. Whom he once effectually draws, he never suffers absolutely to draw back' The Devil may steal the Word out of Men's Hearts, before 'tis en-*

engrafted there by the Spirit, but afterwards he cannot.

2. *There is Grace given to every one, which is of the same kind in every one.* All God's Children, the little ones, as well as those that are more advanc'd to greater ripeness and maturity, have the same *Divine Nature* infus'd into them, 2 Pet. 1. 4. They are all Created again after the Image of God, which as to the Substance of it, is the same in all, though there be some difference in lesser Features. *They all obtain like precious Faith*, 2 Pet. 1. 1. The Faith of God's Elect, is all alike, in regard of its main and principal Fruits. In every one, it purifies the Heart, overcomes the present World, realizes unseen Things, though it does not work and act in every one with equal Vigour.

3. *There are supplies of Grace given to every one; for as all Creatures do necessarily depend upon God for their natural Beings, so God's new Creatures especially for the continuance and increase of their spiritual Life.* From the Day that they first know the Grace of God in Truth, there are further Communications every Day of more Grace, both in order to Establishment and Growth. How much soever God hath already vouchsaf'd it would be of fatal Consequence, if he should stop his Hand. God is always giving, that we may retain and improve what we have receiv'd before. *Hos. 6. 3. He shall come unto us as the Rain, as the latter and former Rain unto the Earth:* As the former Rain which opens the Womb of the Earth to take in the Seed, and as the latter which serves to plump and swell the Fruit.

4. *There is Grace given to every one suitable to their Condition.* 1 Cor. 7. 7. *Every Man hath his*

proper Gift of God, (*ἰδιον χάρισμα*) a Gift peculiar to himself; one after this manner, and another after that. As Christ speaks of a saying, *Which all Men cannot receive, save they to whom 'tis given*, Mat. 19. 11. Some Men have less mastery over their Affections, and God by his wise Providence casts their Lot accordingly. Some are exercis'd with more Temptations, and such God furnishes with more Strength to resist and stand against them. Some are call'd to more eminent Services, and then God enlarges their Capacity of performing them. It is still so manag'd by him who knows our Necessity, that they whose Condition requires most Grace, have most.

V. *What Proportion and Similitude does the Grace given to us, bear to the Grace which was in Christ?* Here Premise a few Things to prevent misunderstanding, and then State the Truth it self.

1. *To Premise a few Things, to prevent misunderstanding.* As

1. *That Grace in Christ to which the Grace in Believers bears any Proportion, is to be understood of his Grace as Man, the Grace which was communicated to his Humane Nature.* Psalm 45. 2. *Thou art fairer than the Children of Men; Grace is poured into thy Lips.* His gracious Words, which often struck the Hearers with wonder and amazement, flowed from this Spring; and therefore in that Character which the Spouse gives of him. *His Lips are describ'd like Lilies dropping sweet smelling myrrh*, Song 5. 13. Jesus Christ as God, was the God of all Grace, the Original Fountain of it in himself, and Au-
thor

thor of it to us; as Man he was a Vessel that receiv'd it by Derivation; it was truly given to him, as it was given to the first Man *Adam*. When God created him. And this is that Grace of Christ, which our Grace does especially resemble.

2. *The Grace which is given by Christ to every one of his Members, is not the same individual Grace which was given to him by the Father.* We are not endowed with that very same particular inherent Holiness which he was, for then we must suppose him to be divested of it at the same Time. Those gracious Qualities which were lodg'd in Christ, cannot be transferr'd to us, for Qualities cannot pass from one Subject to another, or belong to more than one at once. The same Righteousness which Christ fulfill'd, is imputed and reckon'd to us for our Justification; as the same Money which the Surety lays down, is judicially and legally accounted to be paid by the Debtor; but the same righteous Habits cannot be infus'd into Christ and Believers, not the same in number, though the same in Kind. The Case is plain, because the Person of Christ, and the Persons of Believers are really distinct; they are united indeed, but not by a personal Union (for then there would be as many Christs, as there are Believers, whereas there is but one Lord Jesus Christ) they make up one Mystical Body, but not one natural Person; therefore his Grace and theirs must numerically differ.

3. *The Grace given to Christ, was to serve some special Purposes and Ends, which the Grace given to us is not adapted for.* He was not only made under the Ceremonial Law, and under the

the Moral, as others were, but under a peculiar Law, which concern'd himself only, *Gal. 4. 4.* There is a vast Difference between the Work of Christ as Mediator, and the Work of an ordinary Christian; and therefore besides the stock of habitual Grace, of which his Manhood was possess'd, he had the Godhead also to support him; and there was absolute need of it. There was more Service and Duty incumbent upon Jesus Christ, than ever was upon any meer Creature before or since. The Active and Passive Obedience of Christ exceeds all that any Man was ever called to do or suffer. Our Work under the Influence of his Grace, hath a subordinate Respect to our own Salvation, he was to work out the Salvation of all his Elect in a way of proper Merit and Satisfaction.

4. *The Grace in him, and in us are not equally perfect; they are not like Parallel Lines which run the same length.* No Believer can pretend to be so full of Grace, as he was; our receivings are far from coming up to the same measure with his. Christ had an extraordinary anointing in a larger Quantity; we have it drop't in Comparison upon us. *He as the Sun of Righteousness, Mal. 4. 2.* We as twinkling Stars; *He as the King of Righteousness, Heb. 7. 2.* We as Inferiour Subjects. Grace in Christ was like Water in a wide Sea which hath no visible Bounds; Grace in us, is like Water in a little Brook, or a narrow River. Grace in him, was in sinless Perfection at the first, in us it is never so, while we are in this World; there are mixtures of sinful Infirmary with all the Grace which we have or Exercise. He had abundance of Grace clouded with no Corruption, we compar'd with him, have

have a great deal of Corruption besetting a little Grace.

2. *To State the Truth it self, as it is in this Case.*

1. *The Grace which is in Believers bears some Proportion and Similitude to the Grace which is in Christ, as it proceeds from one and the same Spirit. The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, and make him of quick Understanding in the Fear of the Lord, Isa. 11. 2, 3. All Holy Communications to Christ and us are the immediate Effects of this Blessed Spirit, the Third Person in the Godhead. He was sanctified by the Holy Ghost, when he was sent into the World, so are we, when called out of the World, and translated into his invisible Kingdom. As Christ gives us the same Glory, Which the Father gave to him, John 17. 22, So he fills us with the same Divine Spirit which he had himself.*

2. *Christ's Grace and ours have one general Scope and Aim, viz. The glorifying of God. No Grace can be of the right Seed, but what is levell'd at the Honour of the Giver. As it is God's Design in giving it, so it will be our Design in acting it, if it be acted with Integrity. Christ who had so rich a Furniture of Grace, sought not his own Glory, nor the exalting of himself: But he glorified God on the Earth, John 17. 4. This is what he had an Eye to in all he did; so every Believer intends and pursues the same Thing: 'Tis as much his business to glorifie God, as it is his Pleasure to enjoy him. Grace consecrates even his natural Actions to serve and promote this noble End; the Actions of Eating and Drinking, which in others are only perform'd for Necessity, or else for Lust, 1 Cor. 10. 31.*

3. *As*

3. *As Christ had every Grace, so hath the Believer, though none in the highest Degree.* Our Lord Jesus was a compleat Copy of universal Righteousness; none could say to him, as he said to the Young Man, *One Thing thou lackest.* So as to the kinds of Grace, they that belong to Christ, are likewise perfect and entire, wanting nothing, James 1. 4. *And they stand compleat in all the Will of God,* Col. 4. 12. They are not endued with some Graces, and destitute of others; but where one is, there is all. *If a Man say, I love God, and hate his Brother, he is a Liar, &c.* 1 John 4. 20. These Things are not separable, any more than you can divide Christ from himself. Wheresoever Faith is, there is Repentance, and new Obedience; that's a Counterfeit Faith, which is alone; 'tis Dead, and therefore cannot be true, James 2. 17. Saving Graces are always in Connection; *They make up the one Chain on the Spouses Neck, which ravishes the Heart of Christ,* Song 4. 9.

4. *The Matter of his Grace and ours is the same.* The new Creature is therefore set forth by Christ formed in us, Gal. 4. 19. Because of the Agreement and Conformity betwixt the stamp of God's Holiness upon the Humane Soul of Christ, and the Souls of them that believe. Hence the same Mind is said to be in us, as was in him, Phil. 2. 5. The same humble, meek, self-denying, self-resigning Temper. *So he that doth Righteousness, is Righteous, even as he is Righteous,* 1 John 3. 7. 'Tis the same Rule of Righteousness observ'd by both, and so the same specifical Work of Righteousness perform'd by both. That Law which was perfectly obey'd by Christ, is sincerely obey'd by all that are Christ's.

Christ's. *A new Commandment write I unto you, which Thing is true in him, and in you, 1 John 2. 8.* That Law which was in his Heart, is in ours, if we be Partakers of Christ; and that which govern'd his exemplary Life, will govern ours also.

VI. *Use.* Many Things follow from hence, both for our Learning and Practise.

1. *For our Learning.* As

1. *If Grace it self be given, then nothing done by the help of Grace, can be meritorious of Glory.* If our first stock, and all our Improvements are from God, and vouchsafed freely, What Reward can we challenge for any thing we do? God is so much before-hand with us, that he can never be oblig'd or indebted to us; if we were capable of first giving to him, we might expect a recompence and requital; but (says God) *Who hath prevented me, that I should repay him?* Job 41. 11. We do not prevent God with Duty, but he prevents us with Grace; and therefore we owe all that we can do to God, and a great deal more, we can never answer the Engagements which we are under, nor discharge the thousandth part of what he might require from us; so that 'tis impossible for the least or lowest Degree of Favour to be due from him. All our returns of Service and Obedience to God are built upon the Foundation of Grace receiv'd, we do but give him of his own, as David said, *1 Chron. 29. 14.* And therefore the Gift of Eternal Life cannot flow from distributive Justice, but must be a further Act of undeserved Bounty.

2. *If Grace be given, Glory cannot be denied; for though Glory is not merited by Grace, yet always entailed upon it, because the same Mercy is the constant never failing Spring of both. The Lord will give Grace and Glory, Psalm 84. 11.* These Things are continually coupled, like the Creatures which enter'd into *Noah's Ark*, two by two of every Kind (Gen. 7. 15.) as God never gives Glory, where he with-holds his Grace; so on the other side, where Grace is dispensed, Glory is never kept back. Indeed Glory is but the perfecting of the Gift of Grace; the Difference betwixt them is only gradual; Grace is Glory in the Bud, and Glory is Grace full blown. Therefore the Names of Grace and Glory are promiscuously given to one another; sometimes Grace is stiled Glory, 2^d Cor. 3. ult. And sometimes Glory called Grace, 1 Pet. 1. 13.

3. *If Grace be given to every one that is in Christ, then every such one is worthy of our Affection and Esteem.* Wheresoever the Truth of Grace is, it calls for more of our Love and inward Respect, than all the Wealth, and Power, and Greatness in the World. The smallest grain of saving Faith is more precious than thousands of Gold and Silver, and 'tis so precious in all that have it, that one should not be set up in Competition with another. Every gracious Person is really amiable and valuable, and therefore a partial Regard to such or such only, is sinful and groundless. No one is to be preferr'd, so as that another should be undervalued; one is not to be had in Admiration and another in Contempt; but all are to be lookt upon as *Heirs together of the Grace of Life.* He that sincerely Loves any one for the sake of
Holiness

Holiness (without little by Respects) will love all Saints on the same account.

4. *If Grace be given to every one according to a particular measure, it must needs be dangerous to attempt more than this measure will extend to.* 'Tis unwarrantable Presumption to undertake what is above our Reach and beyond our Strength. Therefore David says, *That he did not exercise himself in great Matters, nor in Things too high for him, Psalm 131. 1. He that desires the Office of a Gospel-Bishop desires a good work, and yet Novices are forbidden it, 1 Tim. 3. 1. with 6.* Our sanctified Abilities are only in Part, and design'd of God to fit us for that Place and Calling in which we are. Over-bold adventuring, where we are uncall'd, may expose us to Temptations unassisted. Peter's rash Zeal in the Garden, was a means of betraying him to sinful Cowardise in the Palace of the High-Priest. The Evangelist therefore takes notice of his being question'd by a Kinsman of Malchus, *whose Ear he had cut off, John 18. 26.*

5. *If Grace be given from Christ to every one,* 'tis the great concern of every one to know him, and the main Work of those whom he sends, to make him known. *If he be all, and in all, Col. 3. 11.* If he be the common Publick Treasury, out of which every Soul is spiritually enrich'd, and we have nothing but what comes through his Hands first, we have nothing, if we are ignorant of him. And they do little Service to the Churches who only bow at his Name, and make no mention of his Righteousness or Grace; they that pretend to come from him, and are silent concerning him, seem like to Messengers that have forgot their Errand, and tell a formal Story which
hath

hath no Relation to it, and signifies nothing to them that hear it. Such as expect any share of his saving Benefits, should seek to be led into Acquaintance with his Person.

6. *If there be such a Likeness and Affinity between the Grace which was in Christ, and which is in those that belong to him, they are no Christians, that do not Resemble Christ, and that are not Imitators of him.* This is that which makes all real Christians truly glorious, and the Glory of Christ, as the Woman is said to be the Glory of the Man, 1 Cor. 11. 7. She reflects the excellencies of the Man, so do they the Excellencies of Jesus Christ. As Face answers to Face in the Glass, so do they to him. They are planted in the similitude of his Death and Resurrection; *i. e.* made conformable to both, Rom. 6. 5. Phil. 3. 10. As they are Created in Christ, so they are Created after his Model. They are his Brethren, and he the first-born among them; and as the first in every Kind uses to be a standard and president to the rest, so is he. Consequently, they do not abide in Christ, nor are they related to him, that do not imitate his walk, and follow his steps. We shall never have Bodies like unto his glorious Body, except we have Souls like his; if we do not bear his heavenly Image now, we shall not at the last. We deceive our selves with vain Hopes, and others with a vain Profession.

2. *For Practise.* To those that are yet graceless, and to them that are truly gracious.

1. *What should they do, that are yet graceless?* (For some of that sort may without breach of Charity be suppos'd in every Assembly; we never read but of one so pure, as to be without such

such a mixture; and that was, when Christ Preacht his Farewel Sermon to his Disciples, *John* 14. 15, 16. Chapters, after Judas was gone out, *Chap.* 13. 30, 31, &c.)

1. *Labour to be sensible of your wretchedness, while entirely under the Power of Sin, and the Servants of Corruption.* If so great and good a Man as *Paul* cried out of himself as wretched, because deliver'd only in part from the Body of Death, *Rom.* 7. 24. How much more miserable must you be, that are not at all deliver'd from it? When the second Temple was building, which was greatly Inferiour to the former, God puts it to the People, *Who is left among you, that saw this House in her first Glory? And how do you see it now? Is it not in your Eyes in Comparison thereof, as nothing?* *Hag.* 2. 3. So if any of us had ever seen the Humane Nature cloathed with Original Righteousness before the entrance of Sin, which was our House in its Primitive Glory, what a woful ruinous heap should we discern it now to be?

2. *Improve this Conviction to the deepest Humiliation.* The most prostrate Frame of Soul, is always the Foundation which God laies and builds upon. *He giveth Grace to the lowly and humble,* *Prov.* 3. 34. *James* 4. 6. *1 Pet.* 5. 5. The Spirit of God, which descends like a Dove, does usually light upon the Ground, not upon high and lofty Trees. The first step of *Paul's* Conversion, who had been an haughty Supercilious Pharisee before, lifting up himself, as the rest of that Sect did, was his falling to the Earth, *Acts* 9. 4. Fountains are not wont to break out in the Tops of Hills; but it is the Method of God in Nature, to send the Springs

into the Valleys, Psalm 104. 10. And all Waters run into the lowest Places; so do the Influences of Grace fall upon those that are most abased in their own Minds.

3. *Go to God in Christ by Prayer for this blessed Gift.* It was never denied to any one that sincerely sought it in this Way. Direct your Prayers particularly to Christ himself, to whom the Dispensation of Grace is committed. Remember his Words to the Woman of Samaria, John 4. 10. *If thou knewest the Gift of God, and who it is, &c. thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given, &c.* He is as willing to bestow it, as he is able; believe this, and apply to him accordingly. We may err in the restraining of all our Worship to the Father, as if none were due to the Son. Why should not we address as well to our Lord Jesus to renew our Spirits, as Stephen, to receive his Spirit?

4. *Resolve not to be satisfi'd or dismiss'd without this Gift.* This may be safely resolv'd, and 'tis a Resolution very pleasing to God. If you do but say, with full Purpose of Heart, as Jacob did, *I will not let thee go, &c.* He cannot wrest himself out of your Hands, but you must assuredly prevail. If you give God any rest, you may look for a Refusal; if you can be Content without Grace, you will never receive it. The Rich who feel not the Extremity of Want, are but indifferent Beggars, and therefore God sends them empty away, Luke 1. 53. Take hold of God's Feet, and go not from his Throne of Grace, till you have obtain'd what you go for.

5. *Be found in the ordinary Road of receiving; as the People that brought their Sick into the Streets,*
and

and laid them on Beds and Couches, in the way, where Peter was to pass, Acts 5. 15. They that are desirous of the Alms of spiritual Wisdom, must attend at Wisdoms-gates, where the Alms are generally given out. 'Tis wicked Presumption to expect Grace from God in a careless neglect of the Means of Grace. They that trust in them, and they that forbear to use them, are both far from the Kingdom of God. If Faith comes by hearing, 'tis our Duty to wait for it in Hearing, and not to think that it should be wrought by Miracle.

6. *Put away as much as lies in your Power, all that tends to hinder this Gift of Grace.* Though you are unable to qualifie your selves for it, unable to prepare the way of the Lord in your own Hearts, yet to do what you are able to do, is certainly such Advice as you ought to take. You cannot mortifie the inward Love of Sin, but you can keep your selves from many outward Acts of Sin. You cannot (it may be) overcome some Temptations, when you are in them, but you can chuse whether you will run designedly into them. Now he that pretends to look up to God for Grace, and at the same time wilfully obstructs it by his own contrary Practise, is a gross and shameful Hypocrite.

2. *To those that are truly gracions? What shall they do?*

1. *Do not disown this Gift.* This is mistaken Modesty, and real unthankfulness. We ought not to make our selves Poor, when we have great Riches; as if we were hir'd by the Accuser of the Brethren to bear false Witness against our selves. The Saints that are in Christ Jesus, gratifie the Father of lies as much by

saying they have no Grace, as by saying, they have no Sin. For a Man to proclaim his own goodness is a fault on one Hand, to deny it, is an extream on the other Hand. The Apostle hath directed us to the true medium, *Rom. 12.*

3. *I say, through the Grace given unto me, to every Man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, &c.*

2. *Be sure to acknowledge it as a Gift.* Be not puffed up with that which comes down from above. *If thou didst receive it, why dost thou Glory, as if thou hadst not received it, 1 Cor. 4. 7.* As we are not to boast of things without our measure, so things within our measure, are no just ground or matter of boasting. If God hath given that to us which he hath not to others, what Reason have we to be proud of it? If we had earned it by our own Industry and Labour, Activity and Diligence, we might have some Cloak for spiritual Pride; but as it is, we have none at all.

3. *Take heed of lusting to Envy against those that go beyond you.* There is a sinful Emulation in holy things; a repining at that wherein we should Rejoyce, a secret Grief that others do so well, instead of an hearty shame, that we do no better. For the Cure of this, remember all is given; and if your Gift be less than another Man's, you must not murmur and complain, as if God had done you any wrong. Bless God that some have the Grace which you want, and by that means are more serviceable than you.

4. *Do not think however that a little of this Grace is enough, or any measure short of Perfection.* Be still crying, Give, give; continue still suck-
ing

ing at the same time till you are fill'd with all the fulness of God. This is no evil Covetousness, but that which is requisite and landable. We are not only oblig'd to endeavour the preserving and cherishing of the Grace we have, but to look after increase, and the getting of more. And we are encourag'd to this, because the first Grace is a Gift which makes way for more, *Mat. 25. 29. To every one that hath shall be given, &c.*

5. *Exercise Faith upon Jesus Christ, for constant Succour and Assistance in all your Times of Need.* Whatsoever Service or Suffering you are called to, you cannot have occasion for more Grace than he hath to impart. *He is able to make all Grace abound towards you, 2 Cor. 9. 8.* And let the difficulty be what it will, his Grace is as sufficient for you, as it was for *Paul*, under his sore and grievous Buffetings, *Chap. 12. 9.* How low soever your Stock be, his is not to be exhausted; and that which is most impossible to your weakness, is most easie in his Strength

6. *Lay out faithfully all that you receive, for the Good and Benefit of others, as well as your own.* It would be better not to be entrusted with any Talent, than not to employ it to the utmost Advantage. God gives us nothing but what we are to Profit withal; and it would be sad if we should give the worst Account of the best Gifts. Whatsoever is bestow'd upon any Member in Particular, should be so manag'd as that it may be some way useful to the Body in general, *1 Pet. 4. 10. As every Man hath received the Gift, even so Minister the same one*

to another; as good Stewards, &c. The Grace of God is manifold, and Gifts are differing, but all is to be ministred, by us to others, and by others to us; we are Stewards of his Grace, and if we be not good Stewards, we shall never be Heirs of his Glory.

SER.

SERMON XXI.

August 10. 1697.

DEUT. XXXIV. v.

*So Moses the Servant of the Lord died there
in the Land of Moab, according to the
Word of the Lord.*

IT is no Diminution to the Authority of these Books of *Moses*, that this concluding Chapter must be supposed to be added by another hand ; whether by *Eleazer* his Nephew, or *Joshua* his Successor, is uncertain : 'Tis enough that it was done with the direction of the Spirit of God, by some Holy Person, whom he thought fit to appoint for that purpose. *Moses* had been admonish'd by God at two several times, of his approaching Death, *Numb.* 27. 12, 13. and *Deut.* 32. 49, 50. This Chapter gives an account of his actual Decease. In the foregoing Verses we have a relation of his going up to Mount *Nebo*, to the top of *Pisgah*, and of the view which he had from thence of the Promised Land ; whereupon God plainly and positively tells him, *I have caused thee to see it with thine Eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither,*

Verse 4. the Prospect of it must satisfy thee, without the Possession. And this did satisfy the Man *Moses*, who was very meek above all other Men; for immediately we read, *So Moses, &c.* In which words we may take notice of three Things,

First, *Moses his Honourable Character*, [*Moses the Servant of the Lord.*] This is the Title which God himself puts upon him a little after, in his Charge to *Joshua*, *Moses my Servant is dead*, Josh. 1. 2. and he is so stiled in the New Testament likewise, *Rev. 15. 3. They sang the Song of Moses the Servant of God.* This seems especially to refer to the eminent Service which he did to God in his Publick Office, as Leader and Governor of *Israel*. As *David* for the same cause hath the same Character in the Titles of *Psalms* 18. and 36. And so Ministers that are employed in the Dispensation of the everlasting Gospel, are called in a peculiar manner, *The Servants of the Lord*, 2 Tim. 2. 24. And they who are Faithful in that Service, are more dignified thereby, than any of the Prophane Princes of this World.

Secondly, *The place of his Death*; He [*died there in the Land of Moab:*] i. e. A Land of Enemies, *Balak's* Country originally, till taken by the *Amorites*, and now Conquer'd by the *Israelites*: Thus *Jacob* died in *Egypt*, a strange Land; and indeed in some sense we all do so; for in that better Country to which we properly belong, there is no more Death. Though our Lord hath overcome this World for us, we are but Pilgrims in it; and by Death we pass out of it to our promised Inheritance.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, *The true Ground and Reason of it;* [According to the Word of the Lord.] i. e. As God had order'd and enjoin'd him to do. As *Simeon*, to whom it had been revealed, that *he should not see Death, till he had seen the Lords Christ*, Luke 2. 29. when he came and saw him in the Temple, crys out, *Lord now lettest thou thy Servant depart in Peace, according to thy Word, ver. 29.* It cannot be denied, that this Word of the Lord to *Moses*, to die there, seems to be an hard saying, and he might have raised many Carnal Objections against it. He was now in a state of Health and Vigour, not wearied and spent by Sicknes and Pain, or the Infirmities of declining Years; his Eye was not dim, nor his natural Force abated; and he was short of the Age to which many of the Patriarchs arrived; he was but an Hundred and twenty Years old, ver 7. He had spent very near a third part of his time in the most Toilsom Employment, bearing the Burden of Forty Years tedious march through an howling Wilderness. and yet now when he was upon the edge, as it were, of *Canaan*, he must die upon the Mount. When he had gone so far, another must enter into his Labours, and inherit the Glory of perfecting the Work; not one of his Posterity (which might be some Satisfaction to his Brother *Aaron*, that he was succeed by his Son, Numb. 20. 28.) but *Joshua* his Servant, one that had attended him, and ministered to him; one that had envied for *Moses's* sake, Numb. 11. 28, 29. and yet *Moses* now, upon a much greater Temptation, does not envy for his sake, but delivers up his Charge, and breaths out his Soul, by the sovereign and undisputed Appointment of God. And therefore
from

from this singular and remarkable instance, we may be all instructed in our own Duty.

Observ. *To die according to the Will of God, is a great and necessary Act of our Christian Obedience. Here,*

I. Shew, How the Will of God is concern'd in our Death.

II. What sort of Obedience we are to yeild to it.

III. Why we should do so.

IV. Apply it.

I. *How the Will of God is concerned in our Death?*
This will appear in several things.

1. The general Sentence of Mortality pronounc'd upon fallen Creatures, is the result of the Will of God; the common Death of all Men, since Sin entred the World, is by a Divine Constitution. Men die, because God hath said they shall do so; because he hath resolv'd and determin'd it, not meerly because they are compounded of Flesh and Blood, which is a Frame that's liable to be dissolv'd; for we were of the same make, as to our natural Substance, in our innocent State, wherein if we had remain'd, we should not have died. It is as much in the Power of God to preserve and defend us from seeing Corruption now, as it was before; but his Will is otherwise. Death reigns now universally by a Power given to it from above; He who changes not, hath ordained that this Change shall come.

2. *Death hath its particular Commission from God, with respect to particular Persons. As God speaks of numbring men to the Sword, Isa.*

65. 12. like Sheep which are pick'd out of a Flock, and design'd for slaughter. So Jer. 15. 2. *such as are for death, to death; and such as are for the sword, to the sword, &c.* The Destroyer cannot come near, but only, where God hath devoted and set apart for Destruction beforehand. Hence those distinguishing Dealings of Providence, not only with them under the same Roof, but in the same Bed; *one taken, and the other left*, Luke 17. 34. The Pestilence which walks in darkness, is guided by God to seize only upon such as he hath mark'd out; and it never touches any one whom God will spare, though Thousands and Ten thousands fall beside him, Psalm 91. 7.

3. *The Circumstance of Time in dying is fix'd and settled by the Will of God.* As we read how Christ knew that his hour was come, that he should depart out of the World to the Father, John 13. 1. so every Child of God hath such a determinate hour, yea minute, though we know not ordinarily of its coming, as our Lord did. Every one hath his set time of removing out of this earthly House, which can neither be hastned nor delay'd. Every one hath his Portion and Share of Life it self, as well as of the Comforts of it, assign'd by God, and when that Portion is exhausted, we are truly full of Days, whether we have lived long in the World, or a little while. No Man can die till then, and after that 'tis impossible to live. It is certain, that to this point we shall come, and as certain that we shall not go beyond it.

4. *The place of our Death is limited by the purpose and pleasure of God, as well as the place of our Habitation, while we live.* He prescribes

scribes not only when, but where, our Spirits shall return to him. He calls (as it were) to every Man out of Heaven, though not so audibly as to *Moses*, saying, *Die thou there*; upon that spot of Ground thy Carcass shall fall; as God said concerning *Ahab* with reference to *Naboth's Field*, which he had gotten by Murder, *I will requite thee in this plat*, 2 Kings 9. 26. One perhaps is struck in a Religious Assembly, another in his Closet, one in the City, another in the Field, one at Home, another Abroad; but all exactly in that place which was allotted by God's eternal Decree. Our Lord could not be hurt in *Herod's Jurisdiction*, because his last Stage was to be *Jerusalem*, Luke 13. 33.

5. *The means of our Death are disposed and managed by God; whether natural, or violent, or casual means.* Whatsoever it be which brings us to the Grave, 'tis a Messenger of his sending. When the Manslayer kills another undesignedly, God is said to deliver the other into his hand, *Exod.* 21. 13. so when bloody Men seek after our Lives, 'tis as true that God delivers us into their hands also, if we fall into them. *Him being deliver'd by the council and foreknowledge of God, you have taken*, &c. *Acts* 2. 23. There is no Distemper which proves mortal to us, amongst the many that we are incident to, but what therein executes the Orders of God. He who hath appointed such an Event, does likewise appoint those things, whereby it is brought about. Diseases in the Body, as well as Storms in the Air, fulfil his Word.

6. *The manner of dying, as to Slowness or Suddenness, Ease or Pain, is directed by the Will of God.* Some are snatch'd out of the World, as

Israel

Israel went out of *Egypt* in haste, and cut off by a quick surprizing stroke, like *Sodom's* overthrow, in a moment: Others have a lingring Departure, and the Pins of their Tabernacle are loosened and pulled out by degrees. God is the Supreme Orderer of both, for he takes away as he sees good, *Ezek.* 16. 50. Some slide out of the World, like Rivers of Oil, which run smooth and soft, without any Bands in their Death; and others die with Agony and Torture, as if the Soul were rent and torn out of the Body, like the casting of the dumb Spirit out of the Child, *Mark* 9. 26. And who knoweth not in all these, that the Hand of the Lord hath wrought this?

II. *What sort of Obedience we are to yield to the Will of God in this Case?* Here shew, what is consistent with it, and what are the proper and due Qualifications of it.

First, *What is Consistent with this Obedience, which may seem opposite and repugnant to it?*

Ans. 1. *The use of natural Remedies for the preservation of Life consists very well with our Obedience to God in dying, it is the manifest Will of God that we should use them, when his secret will is not to prosper them.* When we know not how he will do with us, we know not what he hath requir'd us to do for our selves. A diligent Application of Recovering means, may be accompanied with our dutiful submitting of the issue to him. 'Tis no Rebellion against the Laws of God to follow the Rules of the Physician, even in our last Sickness, before we know whether it will be our last or not. The Distemper'd Body ought not to be neglected, though the departing Spirit is to be resigned.

resign'd. The Body is such an Hand-maid to the Soul, that, it must not, like that *Egyptian* Servant, be carelessly left, when it falls sick, 1 *Sam.* 30. 31.

2. *Conditional Requests to God for sparing Mercy, are not inconsistent with this Obedience.* Absolute Requests indeed are not allowable; to ask Life in a peremptory Manner, whether it be the Will of God to grant it or no, is as sinful, as 'tis vain; but to ask it, with a becoming Subjection to his unknown good Pleasure, is what he approves, though he denies to answer. Our Lord himself intreated the passing of the Cup from him, *if it were possible, or if his Father were willing*, Luke 22. 42. So long as there is hope, there is Room for Prayer, yea many Times against Hope, Prayer hath prevailed. While we are under God's Hand, we cannot tell, but that he may hear; when we find that the unalterable Decree is gone forth, we are to cease, like those Disciples, when *Paul* would not be persuaded, saying, *The Will of the Lord be done*, Acts 21. 14.

3. *A zealous pursuit of Holy Designs for the Service and Interest of Christ, to the very last, is consistent with our Obedience to the Will of God in dying.* It behoves us to be carrying on Religious Projects, as long as we live, though we should yield to dye before we have accomplished them. Though *David* was told, that he should not have the Honour of building an House for God, yet he continued his vast Preparations for it, till the Time that he fell asleep. While we have any being, we should be aiming at further usefulness, continuing and drawing the Schemes of more good Works, whether God will

will give us Opportunity for the performance or not. It will be our Glory to dye with such Work upon our Hands; for no Man ever yet, but Jesus Christ was able to do, all that was in his Heart to do for God, [Mr. N. Matther.]

4. *The strugglings of Humane Flesh against the bitterness of Death, though never altogether Innocent in us, as in Christ, will consist with our Obedience in dying.* Nature cannot receive such a Sentence in it self without some Aversion, though Grace overcomes and subdues it. Nature will look upon Death as an Enemy still, though Grace looks upon it as Conquer'd. The Mind so far as it is renewed, is entirely given up to God, but the Sanctification of the Spirit Soul and Body being still imperfect, there will be some remaining Reluctancies. These, tho' not excusable from Sin, are nevertheless reconcilable with Sincerity. The dying Acts of Believers are not free from guilty weakness, and yet are unquestionably done in greatest Uprightness. There is something which pulls back, but a stronger Principle which draws them forward.

2. *What are the due and proper Qualifications of this Obedience?* Ans.

1. *It includes a quiet expecting and waiting for God's Call.* Obedience to God in dying must not spring from an impatient Discontent of Living; for then it is no Obedience, but real unruliness of the Spirit, seeking Deliverance before the Time from some burdensome Evils, wherewith we are oppress'd. Persons under long and great Afflictions, are very apt to say, *It is enough now oh Lord, take away my Life,* as *Eli- as, 1 Kings 19. 4.* But whatever our Exercises be,

be, it is not enough, till God thinks meet. This is a venting of irregular Passion, not an act of Duty. *Rebeckah* cries, *I am weary of my Life, because of the Daughters of Heth*, Gen. 27. ult. But nothing will justify such weariness, till our Time to dye is fully come. A discharge should be acceptable when God is pleas'd to give it, but not be rashly sought out of the appointed Season.

2. *An humble bearing of God's fatherly displeasure, if there should be any Tokens of it upon us in our Death.* We have an hint of this from the very Case of *Moses* here, Chap. 32. 51. *Because you trespassed against me among the Children of Israel, at the Waters of Meribah-kadesh, &c. Because you sanctified me not in the midst of them.* This one Sin and Miscarriage of *Moses* in the Conduct of the People, is call'd to remembrance by God, when he is going out of the World; and therefore as the Lord on whose Hand the King of Israel leaned, was to see the Plenty in *Samaria* with his Eyes, but not to Eat thereof, 2 Kings 7. 2. So *Moses* now was to behold, but not enjoy, the good Things of this pleasant Land. God had threaten'd to kill him a great many Years before, for neglect of Circumcision to his Child, *Exod.* 4. 24. And now actually summons him to dye, as a Rebuke for his unbelief; for indeed this was the Sin that lay at the bottom; *Numb.* 20. 12. *Because you believed me not, &c.* *Zacharias* was struck Dumb, above nine Months for not believing the Angels Message, *Luke* 1. 20. But *Moses* must lose his Life. God had once pass'd by great unbelief in him, *Numb.* 11. 21, 22. But this was not to escape without Correction. and yet 'tis born, as from a Father without Complaint.

3. *A final Farewel to this World, and to those Things particularly, which are apt to render a stay in it most desirable.* When God calls us forth, we must take our leave as Persons that are never to return, as long as the present Frame of this World endures. The Places which we now possess, are to know us no more, and we are to know them no more. Every one at such a Time, may say as our Lord did, *Now I am no more in the World*, John 17. 11. I must reckon my self, as one, that shall have nothing more to do with it, as one that is going to be everlastingly remov'd at the greatest distance from it, and to be no further concern'd in any thing, which hath the least Reference or Relation to it. Such Thoughts are to govern and influence our Minds, in the Performance of this dying Act of Obedience to God.

4. *A quitting and abandoning of this mortal Flesh, as that which is not to be reassum'd, till it puts on Immortality at the Dissolution of all Things.* 'Tis indeed a great Tryal of Obedience, to part with such an old and intimate Companion, which hath been joyn'd and knit by the closest vital Bands, it may be, for Twenty, Thirty, Forty, or Fifty, &c. Years together; but 'tis a trial which our Obedience must be approv'd in. This Body of Flesh, as it now is, is to be given up as a Sacrifice to the Devourer; that which so much Pains and Cost is bestow'd upon, which so many Creatures are destroy'd to support and maintain, is to be Meat for Worms, corrupted and dispers'd we cannot tell where. Under the Apprehensions of Death's feeding upon it after this manner, we are to obey God in leaving it.

5. *A willing Surrender of our Souls into God's hands, from whence they originally came.* Death is exprest by God's requiring the Soul, *Luke 12.20.* now, in compliance with this great Demand of God, the Soul is to be yielded up; God commits this Treasure to us while we live, and he expects a Resignation of it when we die. But this must be with free and full Consent, or else 'tis no Resignation, and consequently no Obedience; for that which is forc'd and constrain'd, is as none in God's Esteem. He sees into the secret Springs and Motives of every Act; and that which we do, meerly because we cannot avoid it, will be to him as it were not done; for God's taking away of the Soul, is his Act, only the delivering of it up can be ours. To die, because we must needs die, because we cannot keep alive our own Souls, and have no power to retain our Spirits, is consistent with the highest Disobedience, and Rebellion against God. But when our Wills fall in with the Appointment of God, and we chuse to die, when God orders that we should, this is truly to die at the Commandment of the Lord, as Aaron did, *Numb. 33. 38.* Here is Freedom and Necessity going hand in hand; as *2 Pet. 1. 14.* Putting off notes Freedom, and must notes Necessity.

6. *An awful and serious Preparation to give an account of our selves to God.* This is as necessary as dying, *Rom. 14. 12.* Every one of us shall give Account, &c. And we cannot die according to the Will of God, without some suitable Preparedness for it. There is no true obeying of providential Calls to any Service here in this World, without some previous Dispositions in our own Minds wrought by the Grace of God, for

for its performance : As when *Paul* was put upon remembring the Poor, he tells us, it was that which he was beforehand *forward to do*, *Gal.* 2. 10. So it is here, as to departing out of the World ; we cannot obey God as we ought in it, except we are competently fitted for it. If we die in the Lord, it supposes that we are ready to die ; and we are not ready, unless our Accounts be so.

7. *A thankful Entertainment of our dying Lot, as a real Privilege.* If we are in every thing to give Thanks, we are to do it in this Case, as well as any other. Yea, there is more cause for doing it at Death, than at any season or time of Life going before it. There is no Act of Obedience which deserves to be more chearfully performed, than this, nor so chearfully as this. It becomes a Christian to be glad, when he can find the Grave ; to go down into it, not as a Condemned Prisoner, but as one who is a Triumphant Conqueror. If there be matter of Joy, when we fall into divers Temptations, how much more when we are going to be freed from all ? If we are to Rejoice in the hope of Glory, when farthest off, how much more when upon the Borders of Fruition ?

8. *A vigorous Exercise of Faith with respect to an unseen State, when God is leading us forth to it.* All Obedience must be the Obedience of Faith, flowing from it, and impregnated with it ; Faith is to run through every Duty of our whole Lives, or else no Duty would be accepted ; but especially we are to die in Faith. And there is great need of our doing so ; for we have no other Evidence of invisible future Things, but only our Faith. *Thomas, who would not believe*

but what he saw, John 20. 25. tells Christ, *We know not whither thou goest*, John 14. 5. 'Tis indeed an unknown Land, and the way through which we pass to it is dark and gloomy, without the enlightning Discoveries of Faith. This alone will clear up all; and so it is with every Believer, as with *Abraham*, *Hebr. 11. 8. By Faith, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an Inheritance, obeyed, not knowing whether he went.*

SER.

SERMON XXII.

August 24. 1697.

DEUT. XXXIV. v.

So Moses the Servant of the Lord died there in the Land of Moab, according to the Word of the Lord.

III. **W**HY we should thus die in Obedience to the Will of God? There are many Reasons for it.

1. *God is Supream and Absolute Lord.* He hath the highest Propriety in us, and the most unlimited Dominion over us. *Behold as the clay is in the Potters hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel,* Ezek. 18. 6. He forms every Vessel as he pleases, and is at liberty to break his own Workmanship without controul; so the same God whose power produces, hath a right to dissolve our Substance. He is the Father of our Spirits, and they are his peculiar Off-spring, and therefore ought to be entirely at his Command: He created and infused them, and on that account may justly call for them, whenever he will. 'Tis but like the Stream's going back to its Fountain; like the Rivers re-

turning to the Sea, whence they came, and the Sun's basting to the place where he arose, Eccles. 1. 5, 7. We know nothing of God as we ought to know, if we know not this, that God hath a far greater Interest in us, than we have in our selves: And that it belongs to him, and not to us, to govern and appoint all those things which do concern us. It was almost in the same breath that *David* said, *Thou art my God, and my times are in thy hand*, Psalm 31. 14, 15. We destroy his Deity, if we deny his Sovereignty; we renounce him as our God, unless we submit to him as Lord of our Lives. If he may not determine the Period of Life, why should he manage any of the Affairs of it? And if we exclude his Providence, why should we admit his Being?

2. *We have the Character of God's Servants, and profess Subjection to him; but we contradict this Character and Profession, except we die in Obedience to the Will of God.* 'Tis observ'd, that *Moses* is never call'd the Servant of the Lord in all his life time, till now that he came to die; because hereby he did most remarkably approve himself such, though he had performed many great and excellent Services to God before. He that is another Man's Servant, must be content to be called off from his present Work and Station, at his Master's pleasure; they that are under the Yoke, are not to be the Disposers of their own Time; or rather we may say, they have no Time which is their own, but what is allowed them. We are under a stricter Law to God, and he that calls himself a Christian, does thereby acknowledge it; we are not our own, but the Lords, both living and dying, and therefore

fore there is as much reason for our dying, as for our living to the Lord, and as little reason for our dying, as for our living, to our selves, *Rom. 14. 7, 8.* It was *Paul's* earnest desire and hope, that *Christ* should be magnified in his Body, whether by life, or by death, *Phil. 1. 20.* And this became him, as a *Servant of Christ*, ver. 1. For we are falsely so called, and assume a Name which our Practice does not agree to, if his Will be not a Rule to ours in every thing, and particularly in this grand and important Point of Life and Death.

3. *Our Lord Christ, when he took upon him the Form and Quality of a Servant, was our Example in this Case. He became Obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, Phil. 2. 8.* A Death so circumstanced with the most tremendous Aggravations, as we can never be call'd to be obedient to, yet he did not refuse or decline it, as he might have done, when his Hour came. His Life was not taken from him, but he laid it down of himself, because he had received such a Commandment of the Father, *John 10. 18.* It was a free and voluntary Act; he gave up the Ghost in the strictest sense, as is plain from all the Passages going before his Death. It was in the prospect of its near approach, that he said to his Disciples, *Arise, let us go hence, John 14. 31.* The words were spoken, where Christ had celebrated his last Supper, but the place which he speaks of removing to, was the Garden, where he knew that he should be betray'd and apprehended. *Chap. 18. 4.* *Jesus knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, &c.* He boldly and chearfully met the Enemy, whom he could easily either have shun'd, or defeated. He

was able to escape this Death, but would not; and therein is a pattern to us, who have no such power.

4. *God never gives a Commission to Death, nor lays his command upon us to die, but when 'tis really the fittest Season for us to obey him in it.* To speak strictly, an untimely Death is never permitted by God; we are never suffer'd to die, when it would be better for us to live. Infinite Wisdom and Grace will not permit it; and he that resigns himself to their Conduct, is sure to die, when it is best that he should. The Scripture is express, *Psalms 116. 15. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his Saints.* This may be most clearly expounded and understood by comparing with *Psalms 72. 14.* (which is a Psalm for Solomon, as Type of Christ) *He shall redeem their Soul, &c. and precious shall their Blood be in his sight;* so precious, that when it is fitter to be spar'd than spilt, he will certainly preserve it. Though God can kill or keep alive, as he will, he does not act after an Arbitrary manner; he never turns a Saint to destruction, when it would be good for him, that his Soul should be held in Life. We do not indeed see the Grounds and Reasons of God's acting, and therefore our Thoughts are not as his Thoughts, but it would be very strange, if we must not trust God further than we yet see, because we shall see hereafter, though not now.

5. *In our Obedience to this command of God, there is the greatest reward.* There is a great Reward in the doing of every one, but above all in this. There's no Act of Obedience so profitable to our selves as this, if we consider the Glory, Honour, and Peace which immediately follows.

follows. If a *Servant desireth the Shadow*, Job 7. 2. Why should we be unwilling to enter into our Rest, and receive our full Reward, when our Work is done? Can we think that our Services would be so well recompenc'd by a perpetual stay here? 'tis impossible to think so. When the Master is come, and calleth for us, (as *John* 11. 28.) we cannot but know, it is in order to our unspeakable Promotion and Advancement. The Arrows which Death shoots, though they kill, yet they are directed and design'd in greater Love, than *Jonathan's* to *David*, which were to prevent him from being killed. Death may seem formidable at a distance (as one says) like *Esau* to *Jacob*, but is very friendly when it comes nigher to us, and does us the kindest Office, which to have undone, would be our greatest loss. Though it did no more than ease us of the grievous weight of indwelling Sin, that's a matchless Benefit; for if we had not mortal Bodies, we must have immortal Corruptions.

6. *This is the concluding and crowning Act of our Obedience to God in this World.* 'Tis the compleat finishing of our whole Work here; when we have done this, we have no more to do on Earth. Now how incongruous, and unseemly, how reproachful and dishonourable would it be, for a Man to live many Years in a course of Duty, and then spoil all by Disobedience in the last Act? Undoubtedly, the Man whose Heart is perfect and upright with God, shall never be left to do so: If we have been truly Faithful to the Death, we shall not be Rebellious in it. But however Exhortations and Arguments are of use to the best, through the efficacious Concurrence of the Spirit with them. He that lives to the
Will

Will of God, cannot be said to persevere finally, unless he dies according to that Will also. We do not follow God fully, if we start and fly back just at the end of our Race, when we should lay hold upon the Prize. *I know thy works, and the last to be more than the first*; was *Thyatiras's* Commendation, *Rev. 2. 19.* God expects that at the last we should outdo all which we have done before. If we have run well, 'tis pity that the last step should be the slowest.

7. *This being the last Act of our Obedience here in this World, will have the greatest Influence on those whom we leave behind us.* As the last words of dying Persons are apt to make the deepest Impression upon surviving Friends, so their last Acts are most likely to encourage Imitation. When we forget most of the Passages of their Lives, we remember their Deaths, and are ready to take our measures from thence. And indeed the Holy Ghost calls upon us especially to *mark the End of the perfect and upright Man*, *Psal. 37. 37.* and to *consider the End of their Conversation, whose Faith we are to follow*, *Hebr. 13. 7.* *The End* here, signifies the close, the issue of their Conversation; Now where this is unimitable, it will obstruct our following of all that went before, how good soever it were. This will still stick most upon their Minds, that should take Pattern from our Faith and Obedience, and tend to dishearten them from walking with God, if after a Life of service we should flinch and falter in the last Extremity; it may tempt some to believe, that God is an hard Master, and that we too late begin to think him so. Whereas an holy submissive Death will have all the contrary Effects.

8. *This*

8. *This is an Act of Obedience, from which God's chiefest Favourites on Earth are not exempted.* If this were a Cup which passed from every one else, and were only filled out to us, it might be more bitter to drink of it, and sinful Flesh might have the more to say against it; but God lays no other Burden upon us herein, than what all his Saints, excepting two, have born from the beginning of the World; yea, even those two, underwent a Change in their Translation, in some respects, we are sure, equivalent to Death. Are we so much better than our Fathers, than the many Thousands which have gone to Heaven the same way, that we should expect any peculiar Privilege? *Are we greater than Abraham, who is dead, and the Prophets, who are dead? whom do we make our selves?* as the Jews said to Christ, *John 8. 53.* Does God deal worse with us, or require more from us, than from all the Excellent of the Earth? Why must not we give place to others, when God thinks meet, as others have made way for us, that successive Generations may still go and come? That Life which we are prone to complain of, as too short, 'tis probable hath been longer than many; and the shortest is certainly longer than we deserve that it should be.

9. *'Tis an Act wherein God's Saints on Earth out-do the Obedience of Angels in Heaven.* This is a mighty Honour to us, that we are capable of honouring God by dying according to his will, which is out of their Power, for they die not. 'Tis their bright and glorious Character, that they do his Commandments, *Psalms 103. 20.* but this is a command which they cannot do, and which they were never tried with. They have
no

no such Bodies as we have, to be separated from; and by the Settlement which God hath made, meer spiritual Beings cannot taste of Death. Now this is a thing worthy of our Ambition, to bring more Glory to God than the highest Angel can; for a Saint of God would seek to excel all Creatures. 'Tis no Tryal to Angels, to execute the Orders which they receive; in comparison of what *Moses* did here in the Text; and yet 'tis astonishing to read, how familiarly he hears of his own Departure; there was no noise, no striving, no trouble in the case; God only says to him, *Go up and die*, and he does it; as when the Prophet *Elijah* had Food set before him, and was invited to arise and eat; to which an hungry Man in a barren Wilderness, would need very little perswasion. To which of the Angels did God say thus at any time? Our Mortality gives us an opportunity of obeying, which they want.

10. *All the Obedience which we have to yield after this to God in Heaven, will be (like that of the Angels) most easie and delightful.* Glorified Saints are doing endless Service, but there is nothing of Labour or Difficulty in it; nor can there be the least degree of aversion or unwillingness to perform it. When we have once poured out our Souls into the Bosom of God, we shall launch into the pleasant Enjoyment of Eternal Praise; and so far as we understand the Worship of the Church above, this will be the whole business, that we shall be exercised in; A business which will contribute greatly to our Blessedness. There is a great deal of weight and force in this Argument, if we think seriously upon it; how hard and painful soever the work of

of dying be, all our work afterwards will be entire and perfect; like crowding through a strait Gate into a spacious Mansion, where we are to walk at Liberty for ever. How desirous soever the Flesh is in any of us to be delivered from Death, no Soul can be excused from that Work which is consequent upon it; we could not be so happy in Heaven, if we were not so employed; as to be kept out of Heaven by an Immortality here, and be most miserable.

IV. To Apply this. *By way of Information, and Exhortation.*

First, *Information.*

1. *It is a great Act of Indulgence in God, to spare us, as he many times doth from Death; since that dying is so great and necessary an Act of our Obedience.* If God had let loose his hand, and cut us off many years ago, it would have been our Duty to acquiesce in it; but by his Favour (as David said of his Mountain) our clay Cottages do yet stand. How many Mercies, National and Personal, have we liv'd to partake of, which we might have been sent to our Grave without, and as we could not have resisted the Will of God, if it had been so, so we ought not to have repin'd against it. In how many lesser things hath God very often gratified his Servants, by prolonging their Days, wherein he could have denied them, without doing them any wrong? As the Life of old Jacob was lengthened out above Twenty years (as some compute) after he had given up his Son Joseph for dead, to see him living and Governor of Egypt Gen. 46. 30. So David saw his Son Solomon peaceably seated on his Throne, before he fell asleep, 1 Kings 1. 48.

2. *If*

2. *If it be our duty to be Obedient to death it self, how much more should we submit to all those Evils, which are previous to death?* We are to Suffer according to the Will of God in every thing, 1 Pet. 4. 19. Or else, how do we, like David, fulfil all his will? Acts 13. 22. and if in that which is greater, surely we must not stick at that which is less. I do not only mean Sickness and Weakness, &c. which are the usual Harbingers of Death, but all those other Troubles and Afflictions which we are born to, and which we may naturally expect some share of, while we are in this World. He who cannot patiently part with any Comfort of Life, when God takes it away from him, is very ill-disposed to yield up Life it self, at the Call of God. Are we to obey God in dying, and do we not think our selves oblig'd to bear these Calamities, which Providence sends upon us while we live? Are we to drink of such a Cup at last, and can we think that we do well to be angry, and discontented at any thing which befalls us in the way? These Things are inconsistent.

3. *How irregular are the workings of our Affections, with respect to those that are fallen asleep in Christ?* God seldom or never removes any of our Friends, especially if publicly useful Persons, but that we are ready secretly, at least, to wish, that they had not died, when they did. We know not how to restrain our selves from such desires, and yet in desiring it we are like Peter when he talkt of making Tabernacles on the Mount, who knew not what he said, Luke 9. 33. We do not only wish their Infelicity, whom we pretend to love and value, but we make our selves Rebels in Heart against God,
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we wish in plain terms, that our Wills might have stood in opposition to his, and that our blind mistaken Judgments might have been allow'd to overturn or alter his Wife and Righteous unerring Counsels.

4. *How blessed should their Memories be above all others, who are most eminently Exemplary in the performance of this Duty?* Going out of the World, as *Moses* did, is like the burning of rich and fragrant Spices, which leave a sweet Perfume behind them. 'Tis observable, that God did that to *Moses*, who died according to his Word, which he never did for any one before or since, *verse 6. And he buried him in a Valley in the Land of Moab, &c.* Though there was none to accompany his Body to the Grave, yet God's peculiar Undertaking for his Interment, by the Ministry of Angels (as may be reasonably supposed) was ten thousand times more Honour to him, than the pompous Funeral of the Patriarch *Jacob*, when he was carried with so vast a Train of Mourners out of *Egypt* into *Canaan*, *Gen. 50. 9.*

Secondly, *Exhortation.* Labour to learn this Lesson well, of Obedience to the Divine Will in the Point of Death; and that you may do so, take these Directions.

1. *Make death familiar to you by frequent forethoughts of it.* Those things which surprize us most, we are usually least submissive to God in; but what we expect and look for, we are gradually reconciled to. If we propose a long Life to our selves, and put away the remembrance of Death, we shall certainly make our dying

dying work so much the harder. 'Tis necessary not only to think that our Change must come unavoidably at last, but that it may come quickly in a very little time. If we live longer than we think, we shall live the better; but if we die sooner than we think, we shall die the worse. If God hath made *our days* generally as *an hand breadth*, *Psalms* 39. 5. we should measure them out successively by an hairs breadth, that when we are at our utmost bounds, we may quietly drop away.

2. *Look beyond death, while you are looking for it.* Let not that terminate your Sight, which in it self indeed is a doleful Melancholy Object. Consider the Excellency of the Life to come, which takes place immediately upon the conclusion of this. We shall not die for ever (as those words should be rendred, which we read, *Shall never die*, *John* 11. 26.) though we die once; and there is nothing here so amiable and perfect as in that World we are going to. If a view of that *Canaan* sufficed *Moses*, which he was never to possess, how much more satisfactory will the prospect of that Heaven be, where we are to dwell eternally? The seeing of our absent glorified Redeemer there, will help us in our following of him thither, and does distinguish us from the common Men of the Earth, *John* 14. 19.

3. *Look upon all the Enjoyments of this present Life with such an holy Contempt and Scorn, as they deserve.* If we be not dead to these things before hand, we shall not know how to part with them at Death. If we lay up our Treasure here, it must needs be troublefom and grievous to
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renounce and quit it. He that would obey God chearfully in his going hence, must not think that any of the things that are here beneath can make him happy ; and therefore the Heart should not be set upon them. It made *Rachel* and *Leah* willing to go to *Canaan*, that they had no Expectation left in *Padan-aram*, Gen. 31. 14.

4. *Make haste with your living work, which God gives you to do, with reference to the saving of your own Souls, and the serving of your Generation.* A Man must be strangely stupified, and harden'd in a false peace, that can be content to leave the World, before he hath answer'd the End, and dispatch'd the Business, for which he was born into it. A comfortable Death does not suit with a slothful and careless, an useless and unprofitable Life. He that hath neglected his Duty to himself, or to others in his place, may very well be backward and unwilling to die. *Job* begs that it would please God to destroy him, and crys, *I et him not spare, for I have not concealed the words of the Holy One*, chap. 6. 9, 10.

5. *Clear and State your Accounts every day ; set them in Order, for their Confusion will cause your Distraction, when you come to die.* Seriously examine and reflect upon your daily Walk and Course, and do not leave those Miscarriages to be huddled up in a general Repentance, when they are forgotten ; which when they are fresh, you may and ought to be particularly humbled for. The more diligent and exact we are in this case, the less Advantage will Satan have against us. A Man can but scarcely die well (as the

Apostle speaks of *being scarcely saved*, 1 Pet. 4. 18.) who hath any thing else to do when his hour comes.

6. *Beware of grieving the Spirit, and clouding your own Comforts.* Though full Assurance be not absolutely necessary to the yielding of this Obedience in Death, yet our Obedience must needs be very defective, where some degrees of Assurance, or good hope through Grace are not gotten and maintain'd. 'Tis very hard to resign, without some Evidence that God will receive us; very hard to let go our Temporal Life, when we can lay no hold upon Eternal. Therefore the Advice is needful, Jude 21. *Keep your selves in the Love of God*; do nothing that may tend to prejudice or weaken your sense of it.

7. *Live upon the Death of Christ, as the only Foundation of your warrantable Trust.* Though you do walk before God in Truth, you will find the need of something else to depend on, for your Title to Glory. Some think that there is a Gospel Mystery in *Moses's* dying short of *Canaan*, and *Joshua's* leading the People into it; viz. to intimate to us, That the Works of the Law will bring none to Heaven, but Christ by his Blood hath open'd our way to it. He that builds his Hope of Salvation upon any thing which he hath done, must either perish, or pull down all again.

8. *Look up to Heaven for Divine Instruction in this great Point.* It was *Moses's* Prayer to God, *so teach us to number our days, that we may apply our Hearts*, &c. Psalm 90. 12. The numbering of our Days aright, is no Vulgar Arithmetick,

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nor can we learn it without a more than ordinary Tutor. No Man ever died like *Moses* here, according to the Word of the Lord, but what was taught of God to do it. He that gives out the Command, must guide our Spirits to obey it. If we can do nothing for God of our selves, least of all can we die to him without him.

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SER.

SERMON XXIII.

October 1. 1697.

HEBREWS VII. xxv.

Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make Intercession for them.

THE Glorious Office of the Priesthood of Jesus Christ, is the Subject of great part of this Epistle; and the Apostle's main Scope and Design, is, to shew the superlative Excellency thereof beyond the Legal Priesthood, which he does at large in various respects. In the two immediate foregoing Verses, he compares Christ with the Priests under the Law, in reference to their Mortality. *Verse 23. They truly were many Priests* (many, one after another) *because they were not suffered to continue, by reason of death*; they were dying Men, and how well soever they discharged the Duty of their Places, yet

yet in a few Years they left it to those that survived them, and knew it no more themselves; the Ministers of the Old Testament had their appointed time, when their Breath went forth, and returned not again, as you find that the Ministers of the New Testament have now in their Generation. *But, ver. 24. this man,* (or this Christ, the Anointed of the Lord, whom the Apostle here speaks of, for the word *Man* is not in the Original, but supplied by our Translators) *because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable Priesthood;* his Office does not pass from him to another, he hath no Successors in it, whom the Exercise of it is committed to, but he still manages it in his own Person, and will perpetually do it. Hereupon that comfortable and encouraging Inference and Conclusion is drawn up in the words of the Text, *Wherefore he is able, &c.* Which words, if they were to be cast into our usual Forms of Argument, would run thus; *He who ever lives to make Intercession, is able to save to the uttermost; But Jesus Christ ever lives, &c. Therefore he is able, &c.* There are many important Truths lying in this Text, but all may be brought within the compass of this one.

Observ. Christ's eternal Life and Intercession in Heaven, in an infallible Proof of his Infinite saving Power. Here,

I. I shall enquire into the Thing which the Apostle undertakes to prove, The infinite-saving-Power of Jesus Christ.

II. Into the Evidence which he proves it by, The eternal Life and Intercession of Christ in

Heaven. With the distinct Uses which may be made of both these.

I. *As to the thing which the Apostle here sets himself to prove, viz. The infinite-saving Power of our Lord Jesus.* The Text it self will lead us to the opening of two Things under this Head ; The nature of this Power, and the extent of it ; How he is able to save, and how far, even to the uttermost.

First, *With reference to the nature of this Power, How is Christ able to save?* This may be stated in the following Propositions.

1. *There is a Power which belongs to Christ, as he is God.* In this, as in all other Divine Perfections, the Second Person is equal with the First. *Rev. 1. 8. I am the Almighty.* The very same unlimited boundless Power appertains both to the Father and the Son. Therefore when Christ had asserted, *That none should pluck his sheep out of his hand,* John 10. 28. he confirms it by this, *That his Father is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of the Father's hand,* ver. 29. Now if any should go about to deny the Consequence, the next words will clear it, *I and my Father are one,* ver. 30. If my Father is greater than all, so am I ; if he be able to secure and preserve the Sheep, so am I, for he and I are one ; we are one in Essence and Nature, and so all the same Glorious Perfections which are inherent in him, are in me likewise. But this, though it be a great Article of Faith, and a great support to Believers, does not seem to be that which the Apostle hath so much an Eye to in this place ; for he is now speaking of his Ability to save, under the Notion of our High-Priest.

2. *There*

2. *There is a given delegated Power, which belongs to Christ as he is Mediator; a Power received, and entrusted with him, from the Father.* God's laying of help upon him for us, implies the furnishing and qualifying of him to afford and dispense that help to us. So we read, *Psalms 89. 21. With whom my hand shall be established, mine arm also shall strengthen him.* Again, *Isa. 42. 1. Behold, my Servant, whom I uphold, &c.* There was such a mighty Presence and Influence of God with and upon his Son Jesus Christ, in the Execution of his Mediatory Office, as enabled and empower'd him to all that this Office required. Therefore he attributes the Work which he did to the Father, and calls them *the Works of the Father*, *John 10. 37.* and argues from them, as plain convincing Testimonies, that *the Father had sent him*, chap. 5. 36. The Power which he had from God to do such things, was a demonstration of his Commission. The Son of himself, consider'd in this Capacity, as the Father's Servant and Messenger, dispatched from Heaven, about the great Business of our Salvation, *could do nothing*, *ver. 19.* but his God was his strength; he that appointed him this Service, gave him Ability to perform it.

3. *This Power of Christ is determined by the Father's Pleasure.* *It pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell*, *Col. 1. 19.* *All Fulness*, therefore a Fulness of Power, as well as Merit; but we must suppose it to be all exerted and put forth, as is pleasing to the Father also. The Power given unto Christ, can never be thought to be employed by Christ against the Mind and Will of him that gave it. God and Christ go hand in hand (as it were) in all their mighty

Acts of Grace, with one consenting Will. *John* 5. 21. *As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will*; not in opposition to the Father's Will, but in conjunction with it. *He came not to do his own will, but his that sent him*, chap. 6. 38. It was his delight to do this, and impossible that he should do any thing contrary to it. This does not import any insufficiency or weakness in Christ, but the regularity and exactness of his Obedience.

4. *Christ's saving Power with respect to us, takes in his Sovereignty and Dominion over all Creatures, which is for our Advantage.* We have the benefit of his universal governing Power, in order to our Salvation. He that is exalted to be our Saviour, is a mighty Prince, whose Kingdom reaches every where, to every thing that he hath made. He that carries his Lambs in his Bosom, hath all the things in the World put under his Feet; he hath all the Wolves that would tear and destroy them, in a Chain, and they cannot touch so much as the Fleece of any of his Sheep, without his permission. *All power is given unto him in Heaven and in Earth* (yea, and in Hell too) *Matth.* 28. 18. *He hath power over all flesh*, *John* 17. 2. whether Devils and wicked malignant Spirits, over all that seek our hurt, or that give us any cause of Terror. He hath a Command over all Creatures, the disposal of all Events, and he can make every one of these, not only not to hinder and obstruct, but positively to promote and further our Salvation. The whole Administration of the Affairs of Providence, which is committed to Christ, serves to this very purpose.

5. *The*

5. *The saving power of Christ, to all that have experience of it, does necessarily include a great and extraordinary mixture of Compassion.* We must conclude his Pity equal to his Power, and united with it, or else no Soul would ever be saved by it. His infinite Ability to relieve us, would be of small Comfort to us, if he were not touched with a feeling of our Infirmities. We have an hint of this, *chap. 2. 18. He is able to succour them that are tempted,* (the same Greek word both there and in the Text.) Now 'tis manifest from the Context there, that Christ's being *able to succour*, implies not barely a Power, but a fitness and readiness to do it, a compassionate Inclination, by reason of his being tempted. Now though Christ be no longer so tempted, for *he sits on the right hand of the power of God, Luke 22. 69.* yet his Bowels are the same. If he wanted those Bowels, his Power would be dreadful; we could only look upon him as our Destroyer, *able* to cast us Soul and Body into Hell, *able* to inflict Wrath upon us to the uttermost; but we could have no thoughts of Peace, or hopes of Mercy.

6. *There is a destructive Power of Christ, which always does and must accompany this saving Power.* In magnifying his saving Power to us, there is a necessity of letting out his destructive Power against our Enemies. If he saves our Lives and ransoms them, what follows? *O Death, I will be thy Plague; O Grave, I will be thy Destruction, Hos. 13. 14.* We cannot be delivered from Death, but Death must be unstung, and consequently destroy'd. This is the last Enemy, but all the rest are dealt with in like manner, *Hebr. 2. 14. That through death he might destroy him,*

him, who had the power of death, i. e. the Devil. The chosen and called of God cannot escape, if the Devil do; if they obtain Salvation in Christ, he must be destroy'd; not as to his Being, but his Power. And the Works of the Devil must be destroyed also, 1 John 3. 8. *There must not remain so much as one of them*; as is said of that total overthrow of the Egyptians in the Red Sea, when the Israel of God were saved out of their hands, *Exod. 14. 28.*

Secondly, *With reference to the extent of this Power, How far is Christ able to save?* The Text makes the Answer, even to the uttermost. *ἕως τοῦ σπαιλέει.* There are two things intimated by this Phrase, - The Perfection of that Salvation which Christ is able to work, and the duration of it.

1. *His being able to save to the uttermost, notes Perfection.* He is able to save fully, absolutely, and compleatly; so that nothing more needs, or can be done. Christ without us, and Christ in us, does all that belongs to this work of our Salvation. He gives a right to Salvation, and a meetness for Salvation: He Justifies perfectly, he Sanctifies wholly; what the Law could not do, that he as the End of the Law (not a destroying, but a perfecting End) hath done. Particularly,

1. *He saves from all Sin*; or else that indefinite expression could hardly be sav'd from an Equivocation, which the Spirit of Truth abhors: *Matth. 1. 21. He shall save his People from their Sins*, i. e. from all their Sins, not one excepted (for as to the unpardonable Sin, he saves his People from that preventively, because none of them shall ever be suffer'd to commit it.) He
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is able to save from the greatest Sins, as from the least ; from Sins of the blackest Aggravation, and the deepest die. He saved our first Parents from their first Sin, which being a leading Act of Rebellion, was a very great one. He sav'd several of his Murderers, and they that shed his Blood were wash'd in it. He saves from the Sin of Unbelief, which is the worst of Sins, and in those that are guilty of it now, is really greater than the Sin of the *Jews* in putting him to death.

2. *He saves from all that is in Sin ; from the guilt and filth of it.* He takes out every spot from the Soul, and wipes out every Line from the Score. He pays the uttermost Farthing, and therefore saves to the uttermost ; he discharges all, and leaves nothing to stand in God's Book against us. His whole Church shall be presented Holy, *and without blemish, Ephes. 5. 27.* No Corruption is suffer'd to domineer, where he comes to save ; as *Job* enters his solemn Protestation, *That no blot cleaves to his hands, chap. 31. 7.* Blots may be, and unavoidably will be contracted, while we are in such a polluting World, but they with whom Christ hath any thing to do, soon shake them off again, as *Paul* did the Viper which fastned on his hand, *and felt no harm, (Acts 28. 5.)* Yea at length, Christ will save from the inbeing of Sin too ; when we quit our earthly Houses, Sin shall be quite turn'd out of Doors.

3. *He saves from all that's due to Sin, and from all the effects of it ;* from Wrath present and to come ; not meerly from Hell, but from all purely Judicial Strokes upon Earth too ; He does not save from God's loving Rebukes, (for that would
be

be to our prejudice, and therefore it would be no proper, desirable Salvation) but from God's furious Rebukes he does. *He hath Redeemed us from the Curse of the Law, &c. Gal. 3. 13.* from the whole Curse, and every part of it. There is not the least Grain of the Legal Curse in all the afflictions which Christ's saved ones do at any time undergo. They are *chastened as Children*; not persecuted as common Malefactors. They are sav'd from every thing that would make them truly miserable; they are exercis'd with nothing but what shall do them good; those very Calamities, of which Sin is the occasion, shall be the means to advance their Blessedness.

2. *His being able to save to the uttermost, notes duration.*

As, 1. *The saving Power of Christ stretches it self to the final Accomplishment of his own Work*; Whatever He puts his hand unto, he will give it his last hand; *the Author and Finisher of our Faith, Heb. 12. 2.* Wheresoever he designs to build, it shall not be said, that he is not able to finish; he will give no occasion for any such Reproach to be cast upon his Eternal Power. He is as able to bring forth the Head-Stone, as to lay the first Foundation. He carries on his Designs of Grace through all Hindrances and Oppositions, till he hath conquer'd and surmounted all; he never leaves off what he undertakes, and is engag'd in, before the *thoughts of his heart* are finally perform'd, and all fulfilled which he had contriv'd and purpos'd to do. He is the *Omega* as well as the *Alpha*; he *shuts up*, as well as *opens*, the great work of a Sinners Salvation and Recovery.

2. *Christ's*

2. *Christ's saving Power will not be exhausted or diminished to the end of the World.* He will be as able to save then, as he was at the beginning; for if he was invested with such a Power before he had actually paid the Price of our Redemption, we have no reason to doubt the continuation of that Power afterwards. If he had sav'd so many for about Four Thousand Years before he came and offer'd up himself, 'tis impossible that since this Sacrifice, any should be born into the World too late for him to save. Every successive Generation yet to come may have the same benefit, as all that are past have had. So long as the World stands, the Elect of God that are in it shall receive as freely from Christ's Fulness as ever any did. His Power is the same, without any Change or Variation in all Ages, Yesterday, to day and to Morrow; *Is my hand shortned at all that it cannot redeem?* Isa. 50. 2.

3. *His Power is sufficient for us in our greatest Extremities, while we live in this World.* In our forest Temptations, and longest Desertions, when like Peter, we are ready to sink, he is mighty to save still. We cannot be brought so low by Hellish Rage, and spiritual Darknes, by the Buffetings of Satan, and the Hidings of God, but that he can lift us up. As the Apostle speaks of the Jews, who have been broken off by unbelief, and abode in that unbelief so many Hundred Years, God is able to graft them in again, Rom. 11. 23. When we are apt to think, that there is no way to escape, that we must and shall, without remedy, perish at the last, he hath his Almighty Succors at hand, and can in a moment rescue and deliver us from all our fears. When the Waters are come into the Soul, he hath power

power to save from Drowning; or else that Prayer was vain, *Psalms* 69. 1.

4. *His saving Power is our present help when we come to die and stand in Judgment.* When we have past through the Changes, Hazards, and Tryals of this Life, the chiefest of all is that which puts a period to Life, and then Jesus Christ is able to save us in Death, tho he do not save us from it; able not only to carry us to our *hoary hairs*, but to go with us farther, when these *hoary hairs* are brought down to the grave; able to support us when *flesh and heart*, when *strength and spirits* fail; able to receive and defend our Spirits at their Departure out of the Body, and give them immediate possession of the place prepared for them; able to answer for us before the Bar of God, and shield us under the covering of his perfect Righteousness from all the Accusations that can be brought against us; in short, he is so well able to justify us, that even in that day, we may boldly say, *Who is he that condemneth?*

5. *The Salvation which Christ works and displays his power in, endures in its full force and vertue to Eternity it self.* *Isa.* 45. 17. *Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation: You shall not be ashamed nor confounded World without end.* Again, chap. 57. 6. *The Heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the Earth wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein die in like manner, but my salvation shall be for ever, &c.* As our Confidence is not in a God who cannot save, or who can save only in part, so not in a God who can save only for a limited time, or restrained season. Our God's Salvation lasts as long as himself, it runs parallel with his very Being.

Being. Titus 2. 13. *The great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.* Those Two Glorious Titles are chained together in Christ, and you may as well suppose the abolishing of the former, as the expiring of the latter: He is an eternal Saviour, as well as Eternal God. Thus *he saves to the uttermost.*

U S E.

1. *Let us settle our hearts in the faith of this grand Point, against the assaults of Infidelity in general.* Whatever vile, blasphemous and dishonourable Thoughts of Jesus Christ other persons in the World have, to them that are saved he is (and ought to be esteemed as) *the power of God,* 1 Cor. 1. 24. There are *Children of Belial* now, as there were in the days of *Saul*, and worse than they, who cry, *How shall this man save us?* 1 Sam. 10. 27. Making little more of him than a common, ordinary Son of Man; but to us he should be no less than *the Mighty God*; we should respect and honour him as such; and thereby do what we can to ballance the contempt which is thrown upon him by a wretched Generation that know him not.

2. *Let us improve this for the strengthening of our adherence to Christ, and dependance on him, notwithstanding all that tends to deter and beat us off.* Never give up this Cause, never cast away thy Confidence, but hold fast the *beginnings of it steady to the end*, seeing that Jesus Christ can *save to the uttermost.* There can be no Lion in any part of the way, between thee and Heaven, but what he hath a sufficiency of Power to deliver and rescue thee from. Look as far as thou canst

canst (says one well) *take the largest prospect that's possible, of all thy Sins, Miseries and Difficulties of Salvation, still the Power of Christ does extend infinitely beyond all these.* We may safely say, *If Christ be not able to succour and help us, we are content to perish; if we rest there, we are out of danger.*

3. *Let us oppose the saving strength of Christ to all the united force of Hell.* The Persecutors of our Souls are indeed stronger than we, but they are weaker than he. We have a Friend in Heaven that can do more for us, than all our enemies from beneath can do against us. Those Horns are not so able to scatter God's *Israel*, as this *Horn of Salvation* is to defend them. If evil Angels be greater in power than the best of Men left to themselves, they are not so great in power as our great High-Priest, *Jesus the Son of God.* When they have done their utmost to separate a Believer from the love of God, 'tis not so much as our blessed Lord hath done to keep us in it. *Behold, I give unto you power to tread on Serpents and Scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, &c. Luke 10. 19.*

4. *Let this comfort us under the sense of our own impotency.* When we consider how weak and feeble we are, it is cause of deep abasement; when we consider how powerful Christ is, it is on the other hand matter of strong consolation. There is a kind of Omnipotency communicated from Christ to those that are in him: *I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me, Phil. 4. 13.* Though we are but *as reeds shaken with the wind*, he can make us *Pillars in the Temple of his God, Rev. 3. 12.* All that are built upon this *sure Foundation*, receive stability from it. There-

Therefore as *Abraham* considered not the deadness of his own Body, or *Sarah's* Womb, being fully perswaded of God's being able to perform his Promise, *Rom.* 4. 19, 21. So the belief of Christ's Almightyness should be mixt with the thoughts of our own infirmities.

5. *Let this relieve and fortifie our spirits against the dejecting fears of our future Apostacy.* How little Grace soever we yet have, we shall have as much as we need, if we belong to Christ; for he is able to make all Grace abound towards us, and in us. How defective soever our Sanctification yet be, Christ hath a Stock enough in his own hands to fill up what is behind, that there shall be nothing lacking at the last. We stagger and reel, and stumble so often, that we are afraid perhaps, we shall never hold on, and hold out, till we come to our Journeys end: But ought not this to bear up our hopes, that we are interested in one who is able to keep us from falling? *Jude* 24. able to prevent every Fall, or able to recover and raise us up when fallen?

6. *When we come to the Throne of Grace, this Doctrine will furnish us with a good plea to urge to God, viz. That the Glory of Christ's Power is embark'd with our Salvation.* It was such a sort of Argument which *Moses* went to God with, when God threatned to destroy *Israel*, he tells him what the Nations would be apt to say, *Numb.* 14. 16. *Because the Lord was not able to bring this People into the Land, which he swore unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the Wilderness.* So may we say, Lord it will teach the Devil to blaspheme thy Son, if we should come short of the Rest which thou hast pro-

mised us ; the Powers of Darkneſs which have heard his Fame, and felt his hand, will be ready to vilifie him, and cry, Becauſe he was not able to ſave them he hath ſuffer'd them to periſh.

7. *This may encourage thoſe that are yet without Chriſt, to come to him;* You are not, you cannot be ſo great Sinners, but that he is ſtill a greater Saviour. Do not miſtake it for your Duty, to aggravate your own Sin, to the leſſening of Chriſt.

Objection. Though Chriſt is able to ſave me, he may not be willing, and then what am I the better? He is certainly able to do many things which he never does; and ſo I may be loſt, notwithstanding his ſaving Power.

Answer. 1. It will do well, if thou art thoroughly got over this Block of ſuſpecting and diſtruſting the Power of Chriſt: We are naturally prone to ſtick here, as the Father of the Child, *Mark 9. 22. If thou canſt do any thing, have compaſſion on us and help us.* Therefore our Lord was wont to put the Queſtion, as to the Blind Man, *Mat. 9. 21. Believe you that I am able to do this?*

2. *There is no more doubt of the willingneſs of Chriſt to ſave, than of his power, where he makes the Soul willing to accept of Salvation by him.* When ſuch a conſenting Will is wrought in us, 'tis an infallible evidence of his ſaving Good-Will towards us. What was he given of God for, what did he give himſelf for, but that *whoſoever believeth on him ſhould not periſh?* How then canſt thou think that Salvation is his *ſtrange work*, or that he is unwilling to it?

3. *Thou*

3. *Thou canst not die in thy Sins, if thou wilt come to Christ to save thee from them.* 'Tis impossible that any thing should hinder him from doing this mighty Work upon thee; if thy unbelief do not, nothing will tie his Hands, but only that; He never is as a mighty Man that cannot save, but where his mighty Salvation is call'd in Question. Therefore imitate their Faith, who were threatned with the burning Furnace, *Dan. 3. 17. Our God is able to deliver us, and he will deliver us.* Be satisfied that he who is able to save, will actually save those that cast themselves upon him.

SERMON XXIV.

October 15. 1697.

HEBREWS VII. xxv.

Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make Intercession for them.

II. **A**S to the Evidence which the Apostle brings to prove his Assertion by; *The Eternal Life and Intercession of Jesus Christ in Heaven.* Here we are to consider three Things, viz. The Life of Christ in Heaven; His Intercession there; And the Objects of it, or Persons on whose behalf he lives and intercedes.

First, *The eternal Life of Christ in Heaven.* In opening of this, we should shew, That he lives, and that he lives for ever, and how the Conclusion of his being able to save, is built and founded hereupon.

I. *That*

1. *That Christ lives*; not only as he is the *living God*, *Hebr. 3. 12.* and so eternal Life is essential to his Deity, *1 John 1. 2, 15, 20.* but he lives as Mediator, and that very Life which he laid down as Man, he hath taken up again, and possesses it now more advantageously than before. This was the grand Controversie in the Apostolical Times, between the *Jews* and *Christians*; so *Festus* represents it to *Agrippa*, as a Quarrel about *one Jesus, who was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive, Acts 25. 19.* The *Jews* would have him to be really in the State of the Dead still, and that his Disciples stole him out of the Grave, to give Reputation to their new Doctrine, but the Apostles were Witnesses of his Resurrection, and preached this where-ever they preach'd the Gospel; for indeed the whole Gospel would be but an empty Fable without it. If Christ were not alive, what's become of the Type of the Living Bird, in the cleansing of the Leper, that was let loose into the open Field? *Lev. 14. 7.* What's become of the Type of the Scape Goat that was sent away into the Wilderness? *Chap. 16. 21.* How have these things received their Accomplishment, but in the Life of Jesus? It was as necessary for our Consolation and Salvation that Christ should live, as that he should die. The meer Death of Christ would profit us nothing; could be no support to us, if he had continued under the Power of Death. Therefore, as old *Jacob* was transported with Joy, when he heard that *Joseph* was alive, *Gen. 45. 26, 28.* So *Job* in the midst of his Afflictions, triumph'd and glorified in this, *I know that my Redeemer liveth, Job 19. 25.*

2. *That he ever lives.* When our Lord speaks of his Death, it was matter of stumbling to the Jews, because (say they) we have heard out of the Law, that Christ abideth for ever, John 12. 34. but they erred, not knowing the Scripture. This was not to be understood in opposition to his dying, but as consequent upon it; for after his Death, and notwithstanding his Death, this was to be made good, that he should abide for ever. So we find our Lord himself from Heaven expounding it to John, Rev. 1. 18. *I am he that liveth, and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore.* The Life which Christ lived upon Earth, was a mortal, temporary, perishing Life, as ours is, (for he took part of our Flesh and Blood in the same poor and miserable Circumstances as we do) but the Life which he now lives in Heaven, is of another sort, of a more permanent and durable Nature. So Rom. 6. 9. *Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; Death hath no more Dominion over him.* He cannot die a second time, as Lazarus did, who after his first Death was raised again, and died again; as the Body of his Humiliation, even when dead, saw no Corruption, so his glorified Body, with which he sits at the Right Hand of God, can never see Death. His present Life is such an one, as swallows up mortality.

3. *How is the Inference of Christ's being able to save, grounded here upon his Living for ever?* Answer, Very strongly; for the saving Power of Jesus Christ shines forth most illustriously in him as living, Rom. 5. 10. *Being reconciled by his Death, we shall be much more saved by his Life.* So Chap. 8. 34. *Who is he that condemneth? it is Christ*

Christ that died, yea rather that is raised again, &c. If Christ had been held by the Bands of Death, or if it had been possible for him so to be held, it had been impossible for him to be the Author of Salvation to any; our Faith in him had been vain, and our hope as a Spiders Web; whereas now 'tis firm and establish'd, stedfast and unmoveable, considering that Jesus Christ since his ignominious accursed Death, is raised up to such a Blessed and Glorious Life. This gives us mighty encouragement in several respects. For,

1. *If Christ had not been able to save, he could not have conquer'd Death, as he hath done.* This one Victory which he hath obtained over that Enemy, is a signal demonstration of his Power; The Grave would have detained him, and must kept him as the legal Executioner of Justice, if he had not finish'd the Work of our Salvation (as to the purchasing part) and done all in dying once. He could not be discharged, till he had answer'd all Demands, and when they were answer'd, he could be under Arrest no longer, but the Prosecution must cease. When the Debt was paid, it would have been false Imprisonment, for Jesus Christ to remain in the Custody of Death; on the other hand, his reviving and breaking loose from those Restraints, shews, that all the Obstacles of our Salvation are taken out of the way. Therefore, if we suspect his Ability to save, we must, with the *Jews*, disbelieve his rising again, and look upon him no otherwife than as a dead Man to this very day.

2. *Our eternal Life is inseparably connected with the Life of Christ.* 'Tis as certain that he is our

Life, as that he himself lives, *Col. 3. 4.* he will not Live and Reign without us, but we shall Reign in Life by him. He does not live meerly for himself, but for us, as he did not die for himself, but only for us. He lives as a publick Person, a second *Adam*, in whom all that belong to him shall be made alive; as a quickning Head to his whole Body, and to every Member in particular, *John 14. 19. Because I live, you shall live also.* He asserts our Life in conjunction with his own; for his Life and the Life of those that are united with him, cannot be divided. *2 Cor. 13. 4. He though Crucified through weakness, lives by the Power of God; so we likewise, though weak, shall live with him by vertue of the same Power.* Hence it is that the Apostle makes the great Doctrine of Christ's Resurrection to stand or fall, with the Resurrection of Believers. *1 Cor. 15. 15, 16. Whom God raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not; for if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised.* Either he that quickned our Lord's natural Body, will quicken our mortal Bodies also, or we must renounce the Faith of both together.

Secondly, *The Intercession of Christ in Heaven.* In handling this, we should enquire what is meant by this Intercession; How he lives to this end; how he ever lives in order to it; and wherein his infinite Ability to save is evidenc'd hereby.

1. *What is meant by the Intercession which Christ makes in Heaven.* That it differs from the Prayers and Supplications which he offer'd up in the days of his Flesh, upon the account of the differing Circumstances of his now Glorious State, which we must understand it suitably to,

is (I think) without all Controversie; That all Intercession carries in it in general something of the true nature of Prayer, seems also clear, whether it be managed with or without the use of words, is a disputed Point. And therefore I shall sum up all that needs to be spoken to it, in these three things.

1. *He appears in the Presence of God for us, Hebr. 9. 24.* He represents our Persons there, presents himself in our stead, and on our behalf, *As Aaron bore the Names of the Children of Israel in the breast-plate of Judgment upon his Heart, when he went into the Holy Place, Exod, 28. 29.* And perhaps in Allusion to this, Christ's speaks of *confessing the names of those that overcome, before his Father, Rev. 3. 5.* When no one could undertake such a desperate Cause as ours was, he interposes and stands forth to be our Advocate; when we did not dare to shew our selves before the Throne God, he acts in the place of poor and miserable Clients, and makes it his Business to sue and sollicite for them in that awful Court of Heaven.

2. *He expresses his Will and Desire, that we should partake of all that he hath procured for us.* So far his Intercession above agrees with that Prayer which he made, while he was here below; *John 17. 24. Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me, be with me, where I am, that they may behold my Glory, &c.* And he who knows what is the mind of the Spirit, interceding in us, does very well know the mind of Christ, in his making Intercession for us. The Father knows not only what we want, but what his Son would have for us. In what way or manner Jesus Christ signifies his Desires to any such purpose,

purpose, we cannot be easily satisfied, but that the Desires of Jesus Christ are all really before God, and regarded by him, we may be very sure.

3. *He insists upon his own Blood as a moving Plea.* As the High-Priest under the Law was to carry the Blood of the Sacrifice within the Vail, and sprinkle it upon and before the Mercy Seat, *Lev. 16. 14, 15.* So the Blood of Christ, does not like the Blood of *Abel*, cry from the Ground, but speaks in Heaven, *Hebr. 12. 24.* And 'tis stiled the Blood of sprinkling there, as being effectually pleaded by him that shed it, and the Fruits of it demanded to be bestow'd upon those whom it was shed for. Whatsoever needs to be requested for us, our Lord Jesus does justly require as due to himself. Our Necessities cannot go so far, but that his Merits extend still further; and upon all occasions it may be perfectly and fitly urg'd by him (though by none else) *Father, I am worthy for whom thou shouldst do this.*

2dly, *How Christ lives to this End.*

1. *Ultimately; Christ lives to God,* *Rom 6. 10.* *His Exaltation issues and centers in the Glory of God the Father,* *Phil. 2. 9, 10, 11.* This was the chief hope and aim of the Life of Christ, while he dwelt among us here below, and so it is of the Life which he now lives in the World above. And therefore it must still be supposed, that whatever other Designs he is engaged in the pursuit of, they are all subordinate to this. The honouring of the Father is more to Christ, than the Happiness of any Creature whatsoever, tho' they may very consistently be carried on both at once.

2. *The*

2. 'Tis undeniable that Jesus Christ does not live for this end only, in Subordination to the Glory of God; but for other purposes besides, which have all a reference and tendency to that last end. He lives to execute his Prophetical Office still; for by his Spirit whom he sheds forth, he leads both his Ministers and all Believers into all Truth, and so declares and manifests the Counsel of God most effectually to this very day. He lives to execute his Kingly Office still, in the Holy Government of his Church, and further subduing of his Enemies; for he must reign, till he hath put all under his Feet, 1 Cor. 15. 25. And he is to sit upon his Throne of his Glory, as Universal Judge at the Great Day, when all Nations shall be gathered before him, and Sentenc'd by him, Matth. 25. 31, 32.

3. The making of Intercession is a very eminent and considerable Act, which Christ lives in order to, though it be not his ultimate or only end of living. I say, a very eminent and considerable Act; for Intercession is a special part of Christ's Priestly Office; the Priesthood of Jesus Christ did not expire at his Death, but after Death, when he lived again, he was to transact and negotiate our Affairs with God. This is the true meaning of that Text, which is abused and perverted by the Socinians, to countenance their false Principles, that Jesus Christ was not a Priest, till he came to Heaven, Hebr. 8. 4. If he were on Earth he should not be a Priest. The plain sense and import of which Passage is this, That if Jesus Christ had remain'd on Earth, he could not have been a perfect and compleat High-Priest; if all his Work as a Priest had ended in what he did on Earth, his Office had not been con-

consummated; for it was necessary that he should go into Heaven, as the High-Priest under the Law did into the Holy of Holies. When he had obtained eternal Redemption for us here, it was requisite that he should enter there, in order to the applying of what he had obtained.

3. *How is it, that Christ ever lives to make Intercession.* So he is affirmed to be a Priest for ever; to be made after the power of an endless Life, Verse 16. of this Chapter. As *Melchisedech*, a Type of him, in a much inferior Sense, is said to abide a Priest continually, ver. 3.

1. *Christ Intercedes constantly, without intermission.* He does not, as the High Priest did it, once a Year, but always. He spent whole Nights sometimes in Prayer, while he was in this World, but yet it was not his perpetual Work, as now it is. He intercedes Year after Year, and is never silent on our behalf, so much as for a moment. As he does not cease to live at any time, so he does not cease to Mediate with God for us. There never is any demurr or stop put to it; he never tires or falters in it.

2. *It is not probable that the Intercession of Christ should totally end, at the end of the World, but rather that it will continue to all Eternity.* In some respects indeed, there will be no occasion or necessity for Christ's interceding after the last Judgment, no need of interceding for the effectual Calling of any of the Elect, nor for the pardon of Sin, nor Progress in Sanctification, nor for the bringing of God's Sons and Daughters to Glory; all those things will be then actually done, and fully brought to pass; but the

the Intercession of Christ will be still needful for the everlasting continuance of the Glorified in their Holy and Happy State. If the Vertue of the Blood of Christ could ever be spent, or its Voice drown'd, throughout Eternal Ages, what Security would Saints have for their Abode in Heaven?

4. *Wherein is Christ's infinite Ability to Save evidenc'd hereby?* Answ. Abundantly; because,

1. *He perfectly understands every Case which be takes upon him to manage.* He is not ignorant of any of our Matters, but is acquainted with them all, and does not need our poor defective Representations of them to him. He knows what the Condition of our Souls requires, much better than we do our selves; so that we may hope for a Supply of our unmentioned Wants, as well as others. His infinite Knowledge of our needy miserable State, is an encouraging Token of his saving Power; for such Perfections always go together.

2. *He hath a great Interest in the Father, and intercedes with him according to his Will.* He is God's Beloved Son, and they whom he intercedes for, are beloved by the Father also. He is one that God rejoyced and delighted in, before the World, one that is as dear to the Father as himself; one that cannot ask, what God can refuse or deny; for his Intercessions are always agreeable to the Divine Purposes, and he never craves any thing but what God hath certainly determined to grant. Every one would think himself safe and sure enough of what he seeketh after, if he had such a Favourite to be his Friend in any Earthly Court.

3. *Christ's*

3. *Christ's Intercession does clearly evince the Validity and Entireness of his Satisfaction.* God would not have admitted him to intercede, if he had not fully satisfied. His Intercession is indeed the virtual Continuation of his Offering which he once made; and we cannot imagine that God should ever give way to this, if that had not been a Sacrifice of a sweet smelling Savour to him. It is because he paid our Debt as our Surety, that he is accepted to plead the Payment as our Attorney. (*Charnock.*) It is because he is our Propitiation, that he is also our Advocate. He failed not in the first of his Attempts, and therefore with God's Approbation entred upon the second.

4. *Christ is always heard in his Intercession, and carries every Cause he Pleads.* His Heart's desire is always given him, and the request of his Lips is not withheld from him, *Psalms* 21. 2. Never was any Supplicant so universally Successful, as this Mediator is. He, as a Prince indeed, hath Power with God, and prevails, without exception one Miscarriage would be enough to damp us; but when all that he does, prospers, what should we fear? The Altar of Incense, which signified the Intercession of Christ, as well as the Altar of Burnt-Offering, which was a shadow of his Sacrifice, had Horns by God's appointment at the four Corners, *Exod.* 30. 2. with 27. 2. to note that strength of Salvation which Sinners have to flee to, and take hold of.

3. *The Objects of Christ's Intercession, or Persons for whom he lives to intercede.* Who are they? The Text directs to the Answer; *For them that come unto God by him.* Here we should shew, What it is to come unto God by Christ, and how

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we are to understand that Christ makes Intercession for such.

1st. *What it is to come to God by Christ?* Coming to God in the New Testament, is put especially for two things.

1. 'Tis expressive of believing; John 6. 35. *He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me, &c.* The latter Clause does without all Controversy, expound and interpret the former. Unbelief is set forth by the contrary; Chap. 5. 40. *You will not come to me, &c.* In this sense there is no coming to God, but by Christ, *i. e.* no believing in him but by Christ. The Sinner must go out of himself, as having nothing of his own to recommend him, or bring along with him, expecting Salvation from God meerly and solely on the behalf of Christ.

2. 'Tis expressive of all the solemn Acts of Religious Worship: Hebr. 11. 6. *He that cometh to God, must believe, &c.* The whole Service of God is to be perform'd under the influence of Faith, and this Faith must have a respect to Christ, and be exercised upon him. God is not accessible in any Duty, any other way. Whatsoever we do, is to be done in his Name, and to have its acceptance with God upon his account. There is no Spiritual Sacrifice pleasing to God, but what is offer'd up by Believers, through the hands of Christ; and there is none so offer'd up, but what must needs be pleasing.

2. *How are we to understand, that Christ makes Intercession for such?*

1. *He intercedes for them exclusively:* For them and no others, they that are final Despisers and Rejecters of Christ, and pretend to go to God
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in the Old Way of the First Covenant, or any New Invented Ways of their own (which usually have a strong Tincture of that in them) are such as Jesus Christ hath nothing to do with, and is not concerned about. All that he lives in Heaven to make Intercession for, are taught in due time, to make application to God by him; renouncing all other Grounds of Hope and Confidence whatsoever. His Intercession is limited and restrained to such.

2. *He intercedes for them, and every one of them particularly.* He calleth his own Sheep by Name, John 10. 3. and distinctly remembers 'em all, with their several respective Cases, of which no two in the World are strictly and absolutely alike; tho they do agree in many things, yet in other things they vary. Now Jesus Christ does not remember one, and forget another; nor does his Intercession run upon Generals only, as if he did no more than commend his whole Mystical Body to God, but he takes notice of every part. *I have prayed for thee Peter,* Luke 22. 32. So he does now for you and me, and all that commit themselves to him; not only Sheep, but Lambs, not only strong but weak Believers; not only those that are worthy of greatest Honour, but such as are least esteemed in the Church.

U S E.

1. *What a woful condition are legal Worshipers in, who still adhere to Rites and Ceremonies which cannot save them?* The Law having a Shadow of good things to come, and not the very Image (or Substance) of the things, can never with those
Sacrifices

Sacrifices which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect, Hebr. 10. 1. When their Constitution was most flourishing, and all those external Appointments were kept up to their very height, they had not an High-Priest that ever lived to intercede for them, but were obliged to the Mediation of Christ; and now they have no Sacrifices, nor Holy of Holies to carry the Blood of the Sacrifice into, those weak and feeble Grounds of Carnal Confidence are quite taken away: *Moses*, in whom they trust, and whose Rules they pretend to follow, will be their Accuser, instead of being their Advocate, as *Elias* made Intercession against *Israel*, not for them.

2. *What a vile Reproach do they cast upon Christ, that employ and make use of other Intercessors besides him!* The Apostle argues Christ's Power to save, from his living to Intercede; they who advance and prefer others to this Work, do really charge him with Insufficiency. Hath he trode the Wine-Press alone, and is he not able to perform this business of Advocacy alone? Did he redeem us by himself, and must he have Partners in his Pleading Work? The first was rather more difficult than this last, and therefore if he must be assisted in this, we may with more reason suspect his needing of help as to the other; and consequently we may doubt, whether he himself can be the Author of Eternal Salvation to us. So that the Antichristian Doctrine, of multiplied Mediators between God and us, tends to subvert our Faith, and opens the door to Infidelity.

3. *We may learn hence, that Jesus Christ, tho' taken from us, and made higher than the Heavens,*

is not the less mindful of us, or less compassionate towards us. When the chief Butler was restor'd to his Place, he forgot poor *Joseph* in Prison, *Gen. 40. ult.* but Christ's Care and Affection is not lessened by his Exaltation. He hath a more tender regard to our Infirmities, than any of our Fellow Creatures that are still in Flesh, can have; as the Brain (where all the Nerves, which are the Instruments of Sense, are terminated) is the chief Seat of all Perception, so the Mystical Body, though one Member may feel the Wrong done to another, yet the Head is most apprehensive of it. He hath left the World indeed, but is as sollicitous as ever for them that are left behind. *John 17. 11. Now I am no more in the World, but these are in the World, &c.*

4. *Our daily renewed Guilt, though Ground of humble Walking, ought not to destroy our Comfort, or be matter of Discouragement.* Christ's Intercession would not be continued, if there were not continual need of it. Some Men weary the Kindness of their Friends, by plunging themselves over and over in fresh Difficulties; and so they must be delivered again and again; as *Prov. 19. 19.* This is not irksom or uneasy to Christ; for though we are every moment Offending one way or other, he does not leave off Interceding; *For if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, &c.* 1 John 2. 1.

5. *The Preservation of those that are in Christ, is very much owing to the Intercession of Christ for them.* If we receive any Advantage by the Prayers of one another, how much more by his? What a helpless and hopeless Condition should we soon be in, if our Lord Jesus did not confirm his

his Love towards us, by praying the Father for us! Our standing in the Grace of God, is a Fruit of his sitting at the right Hand of God. So some interpret, *the Life of Jesus being made manifest in our mortal Body*, 2 Cor. 4. 10, 11. *q. d.* We are supported to go through such Exercises and Tryals by the mighty Influence of our Living Saviour.

6. *Let this embolden us to ask in Faith, and quicken us to Pray with greater assurance:* Having such an High-Priest, to introduce us to God, we may comfortably plead the Causes of our Souls before him. The Prayers of Saints go up as a Memorial and sweet Perfume, by reason of the Incense that Christ offers with them. *Ask of me, and I will give thee*, is the Father's Language to the Son, *Psalms* 2. 8. as if he were to fetch out the Grace and Blessing of the Promise by Prayer. And the same terms are proposed to us, *Ask and it shall be given you*, *Matth.* 7. 7. What can we have more? Yea, Christ himself will see it done, whatever is ask'd in his Name; he hath said it twice, *I will see it done*, *Matth.* 14. 13, 14.

7. *Let this be a Motive to us to live to Christ, and plead for him as we can, while we are here in the World.*

1. *Let us live to Christ*; who thought it not enough (as Mr. *Clarkson* says) to lose one Life for us on Earth, but he also improves another in Heaven for us. What can we do less, then take *Paul's Motto*, and make it our daily Rule, *To me to live is Christ*? *Phil.* 1. 21.

2. *Let us plead for Christ*; with God and with Men.

1. *With God.* While he intercedes for us, let us pray for him, *i. e.* for the Prosperity of his Concerns here in his lower Kingdom. This is to be done continually, and without ceasing, *Psalms 72. 15.* as the Prophet is our Example, *For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, &c. Isa. 62. 1.*

2. *With Men.* Christ's Intercession on our behalf in Glory, will shamefully upbraid our ungrateful Silence, if we can quietly suffer his Name to be Blasphemed, and his Gospel scoffed out of the World. Their Confession of Christ is no better than a Denial, that have nothing to say for him in such a Case. The Spirit of Christ is his great Advocate here in the World; and therefore if we walk in that Spirit, Christ's Honour and Interest will be duly regarded by us.

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